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Magus of the Library

Mitsu Izumi

Based on *Kafna of the Wind* by Sophie Schwimm
Translated by Taito Hamada

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"Liberation"
Scene from the performance art piece *The Legend of the Great Magus*

The "truth" is merely a compilation of events.
It is not always the case that the events
compiled are themselves true.

—Zarud Voynix
The Man Known as the Great Thinker

What treasured books they bore were placed in Bacab Castle, future site of the Great Library.

Based on
Kafna of the Wind

The world was embroiled in the Great War of the Races. Many were those who fled to Aftzaak seeking refuge.

Fighting ceased, and the Library began to take shape.

by
Sophie Shwimm

Years passed, but at long last, the Palena Conference was convened and armistice secured. Among the terms was a document entitled "A Declaration Regarding the Publication of Books."

Within two years' time, the new institution had enacted its code of operations and established an official General Headquarters within the castle walls.

Eventually, the only effective way to manage the sprawling institution was to divide the kafna into groups, each specializing in a specific set of duties.

As its collection grew, so too did its cadre of kafna.

Thus were the Twelve Offices formed.

...the site at which all texts converge.

The Aftzaak Central Library remains to this day...

Magus of the Library 5

TAK

TAK

TAK

TAK

TAK

TAK

TAK

TAK

20 For She Is Gifted

...AND THAT SUMS UP HOW BOOKS MAKE IT INTO OUR COLLECTION AND ONTO THE SHELVES.

The Kafna in Training— these were the lucky few who passed the exam...

..and spent a year studying the Library's intricacies before assignment to one of the Twelve Offices.

AS USUAL, WE'LL END THE DAY WITH A REVIEW TEST.

At the end of the year...

Only they could choose the Offices in which their careers would unfold.

...only the top three would be granted a say in their placements.

"FWOING" ビョーン

Today's top score! You can do it!

THIS BOOK IS ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF PAPER'S INVENTION ON SOCIETY, SO IT BELONGS UNDER 306, "POLITICS AND ECONOMICS."

WELL, I CAN RULE OUT CLASS 535, "PAPER MANUFACTURE."

B-DMP

B-DMP

B-DMP

"THE LIBRARY HAS ACQUIRED A COPY OF BIRTH OF PAPER, DAWN OF RULE.

HOW SHOULD THIS BOOK BE SHELVED ACCORDING TO THE CENTRAL LIBRARY GENERAL CLASSIFICATION SCHEME?"

BUT WAIT. IT DISCUSSES A SEQUENCE OF HISTORICAL EVENTS. DOES THAT MEAN IT GOES UNDER 208, "CONTINENTAL HISTORY"?

B-DMP

B-DMP

B-DMP

EXCEPT... MOST OF THE AUTHOR'S OTHER WORKS DEAL WITH RAKTA'S **LITERARY** TRADITION! IF OUR GOAL IS TO MAKE IT EASY FOR PATRONS SEARCHING FOR OTHER BOOKS BY THIS AUTHOR, SHOULDN'T I PUT IT UNDER 904, "LITERARY HISTORY"?

B-DMP

B-DMP

B-DMP

AND SURELY THE MAJORITY OF THE TEXT CENTERS ON THE LATTER HALF OF THE TITLE—A CLEAR REFERENCE TO THE RAKTA. MAYBE IT BELONGS UNDER 222, "RAKTA HISTORY."

!!

KTUNK

?

ビュー
WSH!

SHE'S DONE ALREADY?!

That's Miss Aya Guunjoh...

She took the top score on the kafna exam. No wonder she's first to finish.

VERY GOOD. THIS WILL DO.

WELL, WELL...

...!

SHE IS SO COOL.

WHAT'S THE RUSH, ANYWAY? IF THE WORK IS SIMPLE...

...ALL THE MORE REASON TO TAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF.

Showoff.

SKRT SKRT SKRT

Check it once. Check it again. Just to be safe.

...DON'T LET IT GET TO YOU, NATICA.

THIS ISN'T A RACE TO SEE WHO CAN ANSWER FIRST.

ARGH! IT MUST BE SO NICE!

WHEN DO I GET MY CHANCE TO LOOK COOL?

SKRT SKRT

INCREDIBLE. THAT'S THE BAR I HAVE TO MEASURE UP TO!

CHATTER

CHATTER

CHATTER

CHATTER

CHATTER

CHATTER

CHATTER

YOU ACTUALLY CONTROLLED YOURSELF?

Now I'm confused...

HONEST. I DIDN'T SAY A WORD TO HER TODAY.

MADHA! YOU HAD BETTER NOT BE-

I'M NOT! I SWEAR!

It's fine! I don't mind at all, y'know?

I was just takin' that Hahal'k jerk down a notch ...

Huh? Oh. The Creyak girl.

YOU KNOW, YOU WOULDN'T GET INTO THESE SITUATIONS IF YOU JUST MINDED YOUR MANNERS IN THE FIRST PLACE.

MADE ME FEEL KINDA BAD ABOUT LAUGHING AT MEDINA...

AFTER I GOT BACK TO THE DORMS THAT DAY, I FOUND OUT THAT MY ROOMMATE OHGGA DIDN'T FINISH THE FIRST TEST, EITHER.

I COULDN'T FINISH IN TIME TODAY, EITHER...

GLINT

I GOTTA GET SERIOUS.

PROBLEMS LIKE TODAY'S AREN'T A MATTER OF HOW MUCH INFORMATION WE'VE MEMORIZED. I **SHOULD** BE ABLE TO KEEP UP.

STILL ...

GLOW

SEDONA WAS EVEN COOLER THAN I REMEMBERED.

Haaah...

WHAT AM I DOING?

HERE I WAS, ACTING ALL FIRED UP AFTER I SAW SEDONA...

Grmmmmmm

PFFT!

LUMP

...AM I... AM I JUST HOPELESSLY OUTMATCHED? CAN I NOT THINK AS FAST AS MY PEERS?

GASP

BUT WAIT ...!

DOESN'T THAT MAKE IT EVEN WORSE?! IF I'M STILL NOT SOLVING THEM IN TIME...

I'M THEO FUMIS!

Let's see...

IT'S MISS KIRAHA, RIGHT?

I LOVE ALL THOSE FACES YOU MAKE! IT'S LIKE A MINI COMEDY ROUTINE!

AW, YOU KNOW MY NAME ALREADY? WHAT A SWEETIE!

Nice ta meetcha, T.F.!

I WAS HOPIN' WE'D BE BUDS, SINCE WE SIT SO CLOSE.

YOU'RE A RIOT, GOLDI-LOCKS!

KIRAHA KYAMNAN

MARGIN NOTE: SPEECH MANNERISMS ARE USED HERE TO REPRESENT REGIONAL ACCENTS.

YEAH! I'VE BEEN WONDERING THAT, TOO!

BUT I GOTTA BE HONEST, I *WOULD* LIKE TO KNOW HOW IT IS THEY RANK US.

DO YOU THINK THERE'S A MIDTERM EXAM?

GOOD BEHAVIOR IN CLASS, MAYBE?

I JUST DOUBT I'LL HAVE ANY CHANCE OF CHOOSING AN OFFICE STARTING OFF SO POORLY.

TH-THANKS. THAT'S REALLY NICE OF YOU TO SAY.

US PREP SCHOOL KIDS HAVE BEEN PRACTICING 'EM FOR AGES!

ANYWAY, DON'T SWEAT THE TEST TOO MUCH. ONCE YOU DO ENOUGH OF THESE PROBLEMS, THEY BECOME SECOND NATURE.

I'VE ALREADY THROWN IN THE TOWEL!

These other kids are too much!

♡

UM... YOU'RE NOT?

THEO, MY MAN! YOU'RE GUNNING FOR A SPOT IN THE TOP THREE?!

You've got guts!

YOU'VE GOT KAFNA QUESTIONS, AND I'VE GOT ANSWERS!

PEPERICO SAVES THE DAY!

YOU RANG?! ...I MEAN, YOU DIDN'T, BUT I'M HERE ANYWAY!

DUN-DA-DA-DUN-DUN-DA-DUN!

I'VE MADE A THOROUGH INVESTIGA-TION!

(Professor Voice)

SO YOU KNOW HOW THEY'RE RANKING US?!

FROM THE UNSPOKEN RULES OF THE TRADE TO THE SAGES' PERSONAL HOBBIES, I'M YOUR ONE-STOP SHOP!

I've heard it all!!

I HEAR YOU'RE CRAZY ABOUT KAFNA!

HOW'S IT GOIN', PEPPER?

HI, PEPERICO!

...AND WHEN GRADUATION ROLLS AROUND, THE THREE TRAINEES WITH THE HIGHEST TOTALS GET TO CHOOSE THEIR OFFICES. EASY-CHEESY, RIGHT?!

THOSE SCORES GET ADDED TO A RUNNING TOTAL...

SIMPLY PUT, OUR TEACHERS GRADE US AT THE END OF EVERY CLASS! AFTER EACH ONE, WE'RE ASSIGNED A SCORE FROM 1 TO 5.

GOOD WITH YOUR HANDS? BOOM. RESTORA-TIONS.

LIKE, IF A TRAINEE'S AMAZING AT ONE *PARTICULAR* THING, THE SUPERVISORS ALREADY KNOW EXACTLY WHERE TO ASSIGN THEM.

WOW. THAT MAKES A LOT OF SENSE.

SO NO MATTER HOW MEGA AMAZING YOU ARE IN ONE SUBJECT, YOU'LL NEVER GET MORE THAN A 5.

AND NO MATTER HOW MUCH TROUBLEDY-DOO YOU HAVE WITH ANOTHER, YOU'LL AT LEAST GET A 1 OR A 2.

IT'S A SYSTEM THAT REWARDS THE ALL-ROUNDERS. YOU GOTTA BE GOOD AT EVERYTHING TO HAVE THIS BAG IN THE CAT.

OH, WHAT I'D DO FOR A SPOT IN GUIDANCE... NEVER GONNA HAPPEN, THOUGH.

AS FOR ME, AS LONG AS IT'S A KAFNA CALLING THE SHOTS, I'M FINE WITH WHEREVER THEY SEND ME!

...THAT MEANS I'VE STILL GOT A CHANCE TO CATCH UP.

TOMORROW WE START OUR PRACTICA. WE'LL HAVE CLASSES TAUGHT BY EACH OF THE TWELVE OFFICES.

ALL I CAN DO FOR NOW IS GRAB HOLD AND HANG ON TIGHT!

TAAA TARARUP

CENTRAL LIBRARY

THIRD TRAINING GROUND

A KAFNA'S JOB DEMANDS STRENGTH!

TOUGH BODIES ARE THE BACKBONE OF THE LIBRARY!

PROTECTIONS OFFICE

HANNAH BRAWN

Get ready to eat my dust!

CARPAL TUNNEL!

STIFF SHOULDERS!

IF YOU DON'T TAKE YOUR WORK SERIOUSLY, ALL YOU'LL GET OUT OF IT IS A SORE BACK!

I'M GONNA PUSH YOU HARDER THAN YOU'VE EVER BEEN PUSHED! BY THE TIME THIS YEAR'S OVER, YOU'RE GONNA HAVE BODIES OF CHISELED STONE!

WE ARE *NOT* GONNA LOSE TO A BUNCH OF GIRLS!

DANG IT!

GOOD THING I DIDN'T SKIMP ON PHYSICAL TRAINING...

キラッ GLINT

...JUST IN CASE I NEEDED IT.

KRNCH

KRNCH

MY TUMMY HURTS!

I CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST TIME I RAN...

KRNCH

KRNCH

FWSH

PUFF

HUFF

OVER-DID IT.

AW, C'MON! SHE *LAPPED* ME!

WHEEZE

WHEEZE

WHATEVER. I JUST WISH SHE'D PUT SOME *CLOTHES* ON.

TMP

HFF...

HFF...

FWISH

KRNCH

HFF!

HFF!

HFF!

OH, FOR THE... SHE CAN *RUN*, TOO?!

PANT

PANT

GREAT. NOW I'M *TWO* LAPS BEHIND HER.

How does she *do* it?!

WHOA! THE SMART GIRL LAPPED ME!

Pretty slick!

ZWISH

BOUND

!

TMP TMP TMP TMP TMP

WAIT, SO HE'S PASSED ME *THREE* TIMES?

What is he, a wild deer?!

WHOA! THEO'S PASSED ME TWICE NOW!

I'VE BEEN LAP-PED.

...!

HFF...

HFF...

TCH!

JUST HAAAANG ON A MINUTE.

WHOA, WHOA, WHOA...

LUCKY BOYS. THEIR BODIES ARE BUILT FOR THIS.

ZOOOOM

BUT HANG ON...

FW

AH

FWOING

FWOING

KRNCH

GREAT! FINALLY A CLASS WHERE I'M CERTAIN TO GET FULL POINTS!

HFF...

HFF...

BUT I SHOULDN'T COUNT ON IT MAKING UP FOR MY TESTS DURING THE LECTURES. I'LL NEED TO BE DOING WELL **EVERYWHERE** TO PULL THIS OFF.

KRKK 7"

KRKK 7"

THE PURPOSE OF THIS CLASS IS TO HELP US BUILD STAMINA. AS LONG AS I TAKE IT SERIOUSLY, I CAN PROBABLY EXPECT AT LEAST A 4.

FINISHED!

ONE LAP TO GO!!

YAY! THIRD PLACE! ♪

OH!

HEY! THEO! OVER H–

EE...

EEEP!

SHVR

FWIP

GASP

...!

OH, NO... DID SOME-THING HA-

...

UM... THEO?

I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU, Y'KNOW?

OH! UM...

GLAD TO HEAR IT!

OHGGA! GREAT NEWS! I'VE HAD THIS TINY PIECE OF CORN STUCK IN MY TEETH SINCE DINNER LAST NIGHT, BUT IT FINALLY CAME FREE!

KRNCH

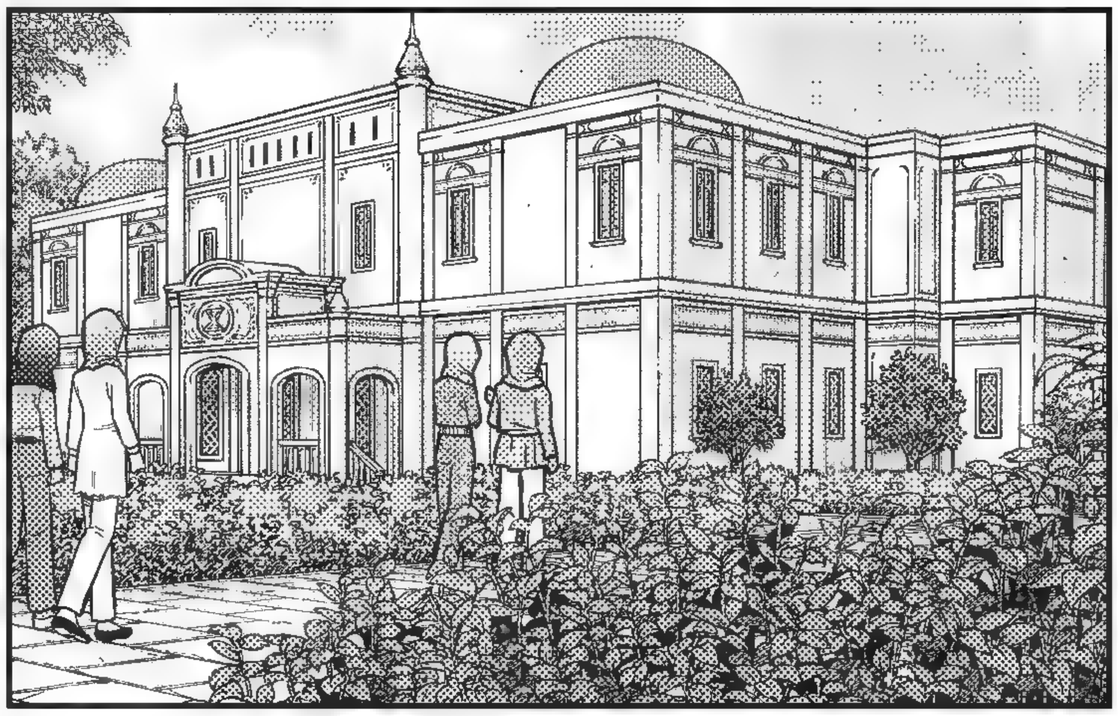
KRNCH

KRNCH

WHAP

WHAT'S THE MATTER, SUMOMO?

YOU'RE LOOKIN' PRETTY OUT OF BREATH!



SIDLE

SIDLE

WOW, THEO. YOU'RE SOMETHIN' ELSE.

LOOKS LIKE STRENGTH'S THE ONE THING YOU'VE-

...!

WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL THAT TOUGH TALK BACK IN THE DORM?

Sorry about that, Sumomo.

Bwahahaha!

MADHA! GET OVER HERE!

⊙-⊙h...

H-HEY, MADHA...

Mornin'...

Whoa, she's tall!

HEY THERE, BLOND-HAIR.

TOK

OH! HELLO, MISS MIDOREEN.

COULD IT BE YOU'RE AFRAID TO SPEAK YOUR MIND WHEN A GIRL MIGHT HEAR?

WH...?!

LOOK, KAFNA GIRLS ARE A SPECIAL CASE, ALL RIGHT?!

HEY. BET YOU CAN'T CALL HER A GIANT TO HER FACE.

K-KEEP IT DOWN!

SHE'LL *HEAR* YOU!

HMM. I SEE.

THANKS! I GUESS I'VE KINDA BEEN PRACTICING A LONG TIME...

IS THAT SO?

I'VE GOT A NAME, YOU KNOW. IT'S THEO FUMIS!

WELL, MISTER FUMIS, YOU'RE QUITE THE RUNNER.

HEY THERE, BOOSTER SEAT.

AND YOU'RE PRETTY TALL FOR A PRINCESS.

AREN'T YOU A LITTLE SHORT FOR A KAFNA?

GLARE

EEP!

WHAT WAS THAT FOR?

NO REASON.

HEH, HEH, HEH...

YEAH. GUESS WE DO.

GUESS WE BOTH GOT IT HARD, HUH?

THEO! A LITTLE ADVICE? ONE BRO TO ANOTHER.

IF YOU SEE A GIRL WITH SHORT HAIR, *STEER CLEAR.*

SLAM

WOW! SHE TAPPED ME WITH THE BACK OF HER HAND!

Was I supposed to reciprocate?

MAYBE SOMEDAY WE'LL BE GOOD ENOUGH FRIENDS TO STICK OUT OUR TONGUES!

A warm greeting among close friends in Rakta society.

HUH? WHY?!

I'M TALKING ABOUT COMMON SENSE IN THE EYES OF THE CONTI-NENT!

THIS ISN'T ABOUT WHAT LOOKS GOOD!

REALLY? I THINK SHORT HAIR CAN LOOK PRETTY GOOD ON ANYONE.

IF SHE NEVER WEARS IT UP, OR IF IT'S NOT EVEN LONG ENOUGH TO REACH HER SHOULDERS, YOU CAN BET SHE'S TROUBLE.

...IS TO KEEP HER HAIR *LONG* AND TIE IT UP!

THE *RIGHT* THING FOR A GIRL TO DO...

I DUNNO ABOUT CREYAK AND KOKOPAH.

THAT GOES FOR HYRON AND RAKTA, ANYWAY.

YOU DON'T GET IT!

I'M STARTING TO SEE WHY YOU WERE SO POPULAR AMONG YOUR CLASSMATES AT PREP SCHOOL.

I'M LIKE THIS *BECAUSE* OF WHAT THOSE GIRLS DID TO ME!

SHE CAN FORGET ABOUT FINDING A SUITOR.

SUCH LOVELY HAIR. WHAT A WASTE TO CUT IT.

HOW DISTASTE-FUL.

THAT'S NO WAY TO RAISE A DAUGHTER.

IN OTHER WORDS, SHE'S A WEIRDO! A REBEL! THE KIND OF PERSON WHO *ENJOYS* GOING AGAINST THE GRAIN!

BEST CASE SCENARIO, SHE GARNERS A BUNCH OF SIDE-EYE EVERY TIME SHE GOES OUT. WORST, SHE GETS SHUNNED!

RESTORATIONS OFFICE
NANAKO WATTLE

CAN ANYONE HERE GUESS WHAT KIND OF PATRON IS THE HARDEST ON BOOKS?

RESTORATIONS OFFICE PRACTICUM

WRONG.

THE ANSWER IS HAMNA.

UM... PROBABLY LITTLE KIDS, RIGHT?

THE SAME BOOKS I LOVE SO MUCH, THAT I WANT TO SPEND ALL DAY RUBBING MY CHEEKS AGAINST, BUT I *DON'T* BECAUSE I KNOW THE OILS FROM MY SKIN WOULD SMEAR ALL OVER THE PAGES AND–

RR MM MB LL

BECAUSE THOSE *JERKS* ONLY SEE BOOKS AS TOOLS TO SCRAPE INFORMATION FROM! THEY SIT THERE *TAKING MEALS* WHILE THEY READ, AND THEN THEY LAY THE POOR BOOK FACEDOWN ON THEIR DESK WITH THE PAGES OPEN!

ALL RIGHT, LET'S MOVE ON. TODAY WE'LL BE LEARNING HOW TO ADDRESS EVERYDAY WEAR AND TEAR.

AMONG THEM ARE ARTISANS SUCH AS PAINTERS AND POTTERS, WHOSE SKILLS WE RELY UPON WHEN RESTORING HISTORIC TEXTS.

THE RESTORATIONS OFFICE IS ALSO NOTABLE FOR EMPLOYING A MUCH HIGHER NUMBER OF KOHKWA THAN OTHER OFFICES.

AS YOU CAN SEE, PROFESSOR NANAKO IS PARTICULARLY FOND OF BOOKS. ACTUALLY, MANY OF THE KAFNA IN OUR RANKS ARE HISTORY BUFFS.

...USING REPAIR TISSUE AND PASTE, JUST AS WE PRACTICED EARLIER.

NOW, LET'S GET STARTED. YOU'LL BE MENDING DAMAGED BOOKS...

WITHOUT DILIGENT UPKEEP, WE STAND TO LOSE ALL PROGRESS WE'VE MADE!

TIME IS A CRUEL MASTER! DETERIO-RATION A FACT OF LIFE!

THE RESTORATIONS OFFICE IS THE BACKBONE OF THE LIBRARY!

ZOOM

ZOOM

HOLY MAGUS, SHE'S FAST.

IS THERE ANYTHING SHE CAN'T DO?

I REALLY ENJOY THIS TYPE OF WORK...

PANIC PANIC

I GOTTA GET IT OFF BEFORE THE PASTE DRIES!

NOW THE TISSUE'S STUCK TO MY BRUSH!

FLUSTER FLUSTER FLUSTER

OH, NO! I RIPPED IT TOO SMALL!

UM... UH... LET'S SEE...

FLUSTER

THAK

ACK!

WHUNK

I'M SO SORRY! I DIDN'T MEAN TO-

BECAUSE OTHERWISE, I'D BE SLAMMING IT INTO YOUR SKULL RIGHT ABOUT NOW.

BE THANKFUL IT'S A BOOK IN MY HANDS, AND NOT A BRICK.

STROKE STROKE...

EEEEEEEEP!

FWP FWP FWP FWP FWP FWP FWP FWP

NOW, A "MANALIGHT" IS A JUST A PARTICULAR TYPE OF STONE...

...IN WHICH A GREAT DEAL OF MANA HAS ACCUMULATED OVER TIME. ITS PROPER NAME IS "HEX ORE."

FACILITIES OFFICE PRACTICUM

SHIIINE

WHEN SPLIT, THE STORED MANA RADIATES OUT FROM THE EXPOSED SURFACE.

TNK

THE ORE HAS A NATURAL TENDENCY TO CONCENTRATE AND ABSORB MANA FROM THE SURROUNDING GEOLOGY.

THE LIGHT YOU OBSERVE IS DUE TO THE PECULIAR PROPERTY OF MANA TO EMIT A VISIBLE GLOW WHEN IN HIGH CONCENTRATIONS.

FACILITIES OFFICE
BITOL OLOMAAN

NOW, THERE ARE TWO THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN HANDLING MANA-LIGHTS.

FIRST IS THE COST. IF YOU'RE JUST LOOKING FOR A SOURCE OF LIGHT, CANDLES ARE A FAR CHEAPER OPTION.

THE OTHER POINT OF CONCERN IS *TOXICITY*.

I'M SURE IT'S NOTHING NEW TO YOU KIDS, BUT WE MAKE USE OF THIS PHENOMENON TO LIGHT THE INTERIOR OF THE LIBRARY.

SO, WHEN YOU HANDLE THEM TODAY, BE ABSOLUTELY SURE TO USE TONGS.

WITH THE AMOUNT YOU FIND IN A SINGLE STONE, SYMPTOMS WILL BE FAIRLY MILD.

STILL, DIRECT CONTACT WITH A MANALIGHT WILL RESULT IN A RASH OR NAUSEA FOR SOME PEOPLE.

MANA IS THE ENERGY THAT MAKES ALL LIFE POSSIBLE.

BUT FOR SOME PEOPLE, TOO MUCH CAN ACTUALLY BE QUITE DANGEROUS.

PROFESSOR! PERHAPS WE SHOULD GET ON WITH THE EXPERIMENT?

GROW TOO CLOSE TO SOMEONE, AND IT'S LIKE POISON FOR–

TOO MUCH OXYGEN OR SALT OR WATER CAN ALSO BE FATAL. AND LEMME TELL YOU ABOUT *RELATIONSHIPS!*

REALLY, THOUGH, SUCH ADVICE IS APPLICABLE TO ALL FACETS OF LIFE.

BUSTLE

EVERY YEAR, TREASURY PESTERS US ABOUT SWITCHING TO CANDLES TO SAVE COSTS. BUT WE WAVE THOSE PENNY-PINCHERS AWAY, BECAUSE WE ARE THE FACILITIES OFFICES, THE BACKBONE OF THE LIBRARY!

HEY, LET ME TRY!

BUSTLE

...WE'VE INCORPORATED MANALIGHTS ACROSS OVER 90% OF THE COMPLEX! WE KEEP THE COLLECTION SAFE FROM FIRE!

WHERE NATURAL LIGHTING ISN'T AN OPTION...

HEAVE

HO!

THIS IS SO MUCH FUN!!

TNK

PTAK

SHIINE

ALL RIGHT. HERE I GO...!

GO AHEAD, THEO! ME 'N' ALV USED THESE AT HOME, SO THIS IS A CINCH FOR US.

YEAH. TWO'S USUALLY ENOUGH LIGHT TO READ WITH.

I KNOW WE SHOULDN'T BE WASTE-FUL...

SO MAYBE JUST ONE MORE?

ACK!

EEP!

I'm not supposed, to touch it!

But it's also not like I can throw it!

FSH

ALV! WH-WHAT'RE YOU-

!

FWING

HEY, BLONDIE. THINK FAST.

PLUCK

HUH?

JUST HOLD THE THING. YOU'LL BE FINE.

PIT

CONSIDERING THE AMOUNT OF MANA YOU CAN HANDLE, THEO, ONE LITTLE MANALIGHT'S NOT GONNA CAUSE YOU ANY TROUBLE.

MANA EXPOSURE ONLY CAUSES PROBLEMS WHEN IT'S IN EXCESS OF WHAT A PERSON'S BODY CAN HANDLE.

MAN, YOU'RE SO LUCKY! I WANNA HOLD A MANA-LIGHT!

How rad!

COULD WE JUST FORGET THAT HAPPENED, PLEASE?

SO MY SUPPOSITION WAS CORRECT! THE TEARS AT THE INTERVIEW WERE INDEED EVIDENCE OF A GREAT QUANTITY OF MANA IN SIR FUMIS!

MANA-LIGHTS ARE *NOT* TOYS.

THE WALK

HERE! GO FOR IT!

BELIEVE ME, I'VE TRIED! MY SKIN GETS ALL RED LIKE I'VE BEEN *BURNT!*

ACK! CUT IT OUT, ALV!

AFTERNOON LECTURE

SKRT SKRT SKRT SKRT SKRT SKRT SKRT SKRT SKRT SKRT

AND FINALLY, WE'LL END WITH TODAY'S TEST.

IS SHE TRYING...

...TO MAKE A STATEMENT? TO SAY NONE OF US HAVE A CHANCE AGAINST HER?

HONESTLY, WHAT'S THE BIG RUSH?

WOW. AS QUICK AS EVER...

KTUNK

HAAH... I RAN OUT OF TIME AGAIN...

PHEW... NOW THAT CLASSES ARE GETTING SERIOUS...

...THIS IS ACTUALLY PRETTY ROUGH.

We gotta do this every day?

MAYBE IT'S JUST MY IMAGINATION...

...BUT IT FEELS LIKE EVERYONE ELSE TOOK LONGER THAN USUAL.

THE NUMBER OF PROB-LEMS HASN'T CHANGED, HAS IT?

I'M SPENT ...

YOU'LL GIMME A PIGGYBACK RIDE TO THE DORM, WON'T YOU, TEPEL?

This old fossil is too tired to move!

NO WAY! PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER, MISS SOPHIE!

WHEN THE BODY'S TIRED, THE BRAIN FALTERS.

IF YOU HAVE ANY CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING, THAT'LL BE YOUR OPENING...

AND I'M NOT JUST TALKIN' ABOUT THE EXAM.

SOMEDAY, YOU'LL KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I MEAN.

IS THIS WHAT MASTER GANAN WAS TRYING TO TELL ME?

FOR NOW, I JUST HAVE TO TRUST IN THE BODY GANAN MASONRY GAVE ME!

I MAY NOT HAVE LOGGED AS MANY HOURS OF STUDY AS EVERYONE ELSE, BUT I WASN'T WASTING TIME, EITHER.

SOMEWHERE, SOMEHOW, PHYSICAL STRENGTH AND ACADEMICS HAVE TO INTERSECT.

You can do it!

GRRRRR

I'LL HAVE TO WATCH OUT, THOUGH.

I MAY BE WORKING HARD TO IMPROVE, BUT SO IS EVERYONE ELSE.

I'VE GOT A NEW RESPECT FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL STAMINA.

FOR SURE! LET'S GET IN SHAPE!

CATALOGING OFFICE PRACTICUM

NOTHING'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE SHELF CHECK!

CATALOGING OFFICE

BYBALIN D'OVAH

WE'RE ENSURING THAT PATRONS CAN FIND THE BOOK THEY'RE AFTER IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME!

OUR JOB IS TO FIND ANY BOOKS THAT HAVE GONE MISSING OR BEEN MOVED TO SHELVES WHERE THEY DON'T BELONG!

INSPECTING THE COLLECTION, THAT'S WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE! WE COMPARE THE CATALOG AGAINST WHAT'S ACTUALLY ON THE SHELVES, TO MAKE SURE ALL THE LIBRARY'S BOOKS ARE WHERE THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE!

LET'S SET THE PIPE DREAMS ASIDE AND FOCUS ON TODAY'S CLASS, SHALL WE?

THEY'D GET LOST IN THE STACKS! SO I WANNA SEE *ALL THREE* OF THE TOP TRAINEES PICKING CATALOGING THIS YEAR. YOU HEAR ME?!!

EVEN THE FANCY-PANTS GUIDANCE OFFICE CAN'T MANAGE WITHOUT OUR HARD WORK!

AND BELIEVE ME, IT'S JUST AS BORING AS IT SOUNDS! MORE, EVEN!

BUT CATALOG-ING IS THE BACKBONE OF THE LIBRARY!

LOOKS LIKE WE'RE PARTNERS TODAY.

ONCE YOU FIND YOUR PARTNER, HEAD TO YOUR ASSIGNED SHELVES.

YOU'LL BE WORKING IN PAIRS.

IT'S A PLEASURE TO BE WORKING WITH YOU!

CHECK.

UNABRIDGED HISTORY OF THE KADOE.

CHECK.

LEGACY OF THE MASK: ORIGINS OF THE GREAT MAGI.

...CHECK.

RULE BY GRIMOIRE.

UM... CHECK.

DEFINING THE END OF THE KADOE: FALL OF AN EMPIRE AND RISE OF THE RAKTA.

The shelf check was a two-person job: one reads from the catalog, while the other confirms the books on the shelf.

OH! FOUND IT!

...IT'S DOWN ON YOUR RIGHT.

WHITHER THE TRINE HAS VANISHED.

WHITHER ...

WHITHER ...

LET'S SEE... ...

NOT JUST THE PHYSICAL EFFORT, BUT THE MENTAL DEMAND, TOO!

WOW... THIS IS REALLY TOUGH.

TIME TO SWITCH.

HMM... WE ENDED UP WITH ONE EXTRA.

IT MUST'VE BEEN RESHELVED INCOR-RECTLY.

"JOLT"

WE'VE GOT THAT BOOK OVER HERE!

I CAN'T FIND *BELFOUR'S QUEST* ANY-WHERE!

I can barely keep up!!

SH-SHE'S SO FAST ...!

UM... THE NEXT ONE IS...

JAIN SEI TEHN: THE FIRST GREAT MAGUS.

DARK AGE OF THE MASKS.

CHECK.

CHECK.

WARRING AGAINST THE HAUPI.

CHECK.

I DON'T BELIEVE IT...

She heard that from all the way across the room?

...OF MY THREE CHANCES TO CHOOSE AN OFFICE, ONE IS PRETTY MUCH SPOKEN FOR.

THIS PRESSURE IS WEARING ME OUT...

I'LL JUST REST FOR A-

THAT'S AN HONOR RESERVED FOR THE INCOMING TRAINEE WITH THE BEST EXAM SCORE. IN OTHER WORDS...

AT THE PLENUM, I WAS SO EXCITED TO SEE SEDONA, I COULD HARDLY FOCUS...

...BUT I VAGUELY REMEMBER MISS GUUNJOH DELIVERING A SPEECH.

GLANCE

PHEW

PINCH

...

SST

FWIP

SWP SWP

KEEP IT MOVING! I DON'T WANT TO HEAR YOU REPEATING ENTRIES!

Ouchie...

SQUEEEEZE

...

DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF WHAT MATTERS, THEO FUMIS!

YOU'RE NOT HERE TO SCORE POINTS BY PRETENDING TO WORK HARD.

YOU'RE HERE TO DO YOUR PART FOR THE BOOKS!

BUT IT SURE IS FUNNY HOW POINTS HAVE A WAY OF PREOC-CUPYING THE MIND...

OF COURSE!

NEXT IS...

LET'S CONTINUE.

...

MISS GUUN-JOH?

NEXT ...

UM... MISS GUUNJOH?

HAVE YOU NOTICED HOW *EVERY* OFFICE CLAIMS TO BE THE BACKBONE?

MAN, AM I TIRED!

GOOD WORK, PEOPLE! LET'S HEAD BACK TO THE MAIN COMPLEX.

...I'VE BEEN MEANING TO TELL YOU THAT.

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU REMEMBER, BUT YOU HELPED ME OUT AT THE KAFNA EXAM. IT WAS DURING THE PRACTICAL COMPONENT. I'M REALLY GRATEFUL FOR WHAT YOU DID...

...DON'T MENTION IT.

SO... THANK YOU.

FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART!

...
GUIDANCE.

WOW! THE GUIDANCE OFFICE!

THERE SURE ARE A LOT OF OFFICES, DON'T YOU THINK? HAVE YOU DECIDED ON ONE TO AIM FOR?

...NOT PARTICU-LARLY.

...

DO YOU HAVE SOME KIND OF SECRET METHOD?

I'M ALWAYS AMAZED AT HOW QUICKLY YOU FINISH THE TESTS AFTER EACH DAY'S LECTURE.

YOU'RE SUCH A FAST WORKER. IT'S A PERFECT FIT FOR YOU!

1) SHE DOESN'T TALK TO DUMMIES.
2) SHE DOESN'T TALK TO PROVIN-CIALS.
3) I REEK OF THE COUNTRY SO BAD, SHE CAN'T STAND IT.

AND IF I'M LESS OPTIMIS-TIC...

1) SHE'S SHY.
2) SHE'S A WOMAN OF FEW WORDS.

LET'S SEE. BEST CASE SCENARIO HERE...

BUT... SURELY THAT'S NOT TRUE!

I DON'T READ FOR PLEASURE.

I'M REALLY INTO POP FICTION. WHAT ABOUT YOU? WHAT KIND OF BOOKS DO YOU READ WHEN YOU'RE NOT STUDYING?

WELL, LET'S NOT GIVE UP JUST YET...

I MEAN...

...ISN'T THAT WHY YOU BECAME A KAFNA? BECAUSE YOU LIKE BOOKS?

...!

GIGGLE...

YOU HAVEN'T THE FIRST CLUE ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.

I DON'T CARE AT ALL FOR BOOKS.

YOU KNOW, MAYBE THE REASON YOU CAN'T KEEP UP...

...IS BECAUSE YOU AREN'T TAKING THIS AS SERIOUSLY AS THE REST OF US.

ガヤ CHATTER

ガヤ CHATTER

THEO-OO!

IT'S AWFUL! I RAN OUT OF TIME *AGAIN!*

SLUMP

ええ!?

WOWERS!

DID SOMETHING HAPPEN WITH AYA? YOU TWO WERE PART-NERS...

...FOR THE CATALOGING CLASS, RIGHT?

...WELL, WHAT HAPPENED WAS...

THEN WHAT IS IT?

!

C'MON! SURELY YOU DIDN'T DO *THAT* BAD!

NO. IT'S NOT ABOUT THE TEST...

YOU'RE WAY TOO CONSIDER-ATE.

I SHOULDN'T TALK ABOUT IT WHEN I DON'T KNOW WHY SHE SAID THE THINGS SHE DID. IT'S NOT FAIR TO HER.

...

NO. FORGET IT.

SST ス...

FWIP

IF *I* WANTED TO KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON IN AYA'S HEAD, HERE'S WHAT I'D DO...

BUT LISTEN, THEO.

IT'S NOT GOOD TO KEEP STUFF BOTTLED UP.

OH, UM...!

GOOD EVENING, MISS MIDOREEN.

CAN I HELP YOU, MISTER FUMIS?

P-TMP

WOW! REALLY ?!

WE GREW UP TOGETHER.

TRUST ME. I KNOW THAT GIRL INSIDE AND OUT.

MAYBE THIS ISN'T THE PLACE TO...

AND GET THIS...!

AHA HA HA HA HA!

BUT, UM...

UM! YES, THAT'S RIGHT!

I NOTICED YOU AND MISS GUUNJOH SPEND A LOT OF TIME TOGETHER, AND...

LEMME GUESS. YOU'RE HERE FOR THE RUNDOWN ON AYA.

YES. LET'S FIND SOMEWHERE QUIET.

*SHE'S SO... **URBANE**. IT'S HONESTLY KIND OF INTIMIDATING.*

O-OH! UM...!

PLUNK

WHAT IS IT YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW?

...AND?

YEAH... I SHOULDN'T HAVE PESTERED HER LIKE THAT.

BUT I REALLY OWE HER FOR HELPING ME ON THE EXAM...

...SO I'D LIKE TO ILLUMINATE WHAT WENT WRONG AND RECONCILE OUR DIFFERENCES.

WHAT ARE YOU, A POLITI-CIAN?

I CAN SEE WHY SHE'S SO UPSET WITH YOU.

HMM. SO THAT'S THE STORY...

SEE, THE THING IS...

THAT WAS A JOKE. C'mon. Get back here.

PLOD ﾄﾄﾄ PLOD ﾄﾄﾄ...

SO, I WAS RIGHT ...

MAYBE SHE JUST DOESN'T LIKE TALK-ING TO *DUMMIES.*

I would've never guessed!

HUH?!

SO WHY WAS SHE SO QUIET WITH ME?

NORMALLY, YOU CAN'T GET A WORD IN EDGEWISE WITH THAT GIRL.

AND AYA, A WOMAN OF FEW WORDS? *PLEASE.*

Talk about boresville.

PLEASE, SPARE ME.

...WHY?! WHAT MADE HER-

!!

IF YOU DON'T MIND, COULD YOU TELL ME ABOUT MISS GUUNJOH'S CHILDHOOD?

Y'KNOW, A LONG TIME AGO...

...SHE USED TO SMILE AND CHATTER AWAY ALL DAY. IT WAS ADORABLE.

'COURSE, THAT'S ANCIENT HISTORY NOW.

GET BACK HERE AND LISTEN.

HEY. I'M JOKING.

OH... I'LL BE ON MY WAY, THEN.

PLOD ﾄﾄﾄ PLOD ﾄﾄﾄ

WHAT I'M PROPOSING...

...IS AN EXCHANGE OF *KNOWLEDGE*. I'LL TELL YOU AYA'S STORY. BUT FIRST I WANT TO KNOW YOURS.

YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH THE GREAT THINKER ZARUD? HE URGED FOR ALL INFORMATION TO BE SHARED AS WIDELY AS POSSIBLE.

OF COURSE, IT'S GOING TO COST YOU.

HUH?! I don't really have any money...

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE, MISTER FUMIS.

EXACTLY.

YOU MEAN...

...MY *PAST*?

THAT'S QUITE THE ROCKY ROAD.

A KAFNA HOPEFUL WORKING AS A MASONER ON THE SIDE.

HMM... FASCINATING.

...

IT ALSO EXPLAINS WHY YOU SMELL LIKE THE MOUNTAINS.

If you see a girl with short hair, steer clear.

I DIDN'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT...

...BUT MAYBE SUMOMO WAS RIGHT.

I MUCH PREFER YOUR SCENT TO THE CONSTANT CLOY OF INCENSE IN THE DORMS.

HEY. I'M JUST TEASING AGAIN.

HEH, HEH, HEH...

THAT GIRL WILL THUMB THROUGH THE SAME PICTURE DICTIONARY UNTIL THE PAGES RIP.

A LIE IF I'VE EVER HEARD ONE.

WHY WOULD ANYONE WHO DOESN'T LIKE BOOKS BECOME A KAFNA?!

RIGHT?! I THOUGHT IT SOUNDED FISHY!

YOU'VE GOT A VERY DEEP LOVE FOR BOOKS, AND THAT'S WHAT LED YOU TO BECOME A KAFNA.

ANYWAY, I SEE WHERE YOU'RE COMING FROM NOW.

...THAT'S RIGHT.

NOW, YOU SAY AYA CLAIMS SHE DOESN'T CARE FOR READING?

...IN CONNECTING PEOPLE AND TEXTS. WHAT OTHER MOTIVATION COULD THERE BE?"

"PEOPLE BECOME KAFNA BECAUSE THEY LOVE BOOKS! THEY GET TO SPECIALIZE...

...FOR *EVERYONE!*"

"WHY, THAT'S JUST THE WAY IT IS...

IS THAT WHAT'S GOING THROUGH YOUR MIND?

HAVE YOU HONESTLY NEVER GROWN OUT OF THAT DELUDED FANTASY?

OH, NO...

THE WOMEN OF THIS CONTINENT AREN'T FREE TO PURSUE WHATEVER CAREER THEY DESIRE.

THE WORLD SAYS THEY DON'T HAVE THE *RIGHT* TO WORK.

SEEMS YOU'VE PIECED IT TOGETHER.

YOU SIMPLY NEVER TOOK IT TO ITS LOGICAL CONCLU-SION.

AND THUS, MANY MORE WOMEN FLOCK TO THE CENTRAL LIBRARY THAN THEIR UNFETTERED MALE PEERS.

BUT THERE ARE A FEW EXCEPTIONS– JOBS A WOMAN CAN ASPIRE TO, LIKE A SELECT FEW TYPES OF DOCTORS...

YOU'VE BEEN WELL AWARE OF THAT TRUTH.

...OR MAGI...

...OR *KAFNA*.

WOMEN BECOME KAFNA BECAUSE THEY *HAVE* TO.

THAT'S RIGHT.

EVERYONE BORN ONTO THIS CONTINENT IS GIVEN ONE OF TWO ROLES.

OR THEY'RE EXPECTED TO QUIETLY, GRACE-FULLY REMAIN AT HOME, TENDING TO FIELDS AND FAMILY, REARING THE NEXT GEN-ERATION.

THEY'RE EITHER EXPECTED TO BOLDLY VENTURE FORTH TO WORK, EARN, AND–AT TIMES–BATTLE DISASTER AND FOREIGN FOE.

AND AS MUCH AS MEMBERS OF ONE SIDE MIGHT ENVY THE OTHER, THEY'RE NEVER GIVEN THE OPTION TO CHOOSE.

TO REBEL AGAINST IT IS TO INVITE GOSSIP AND CENSURE.

EVERY MYTH, RELIGION, AND HISTORY BOOK ESPOUSES THIS SAME SET OF VALUES.

THE MOMENT YOU'RE BORN, YOU FALL INTO ONE ROLE OR THE OTHER.

THE TWO ARE SEPARATED BY NIGH ENDLESS DIFFERENCES. CLOTHES, HAIR, SPEECH, ACTIONS...

...AND MEN, IN TURN, ARE NEVER ALLOWED TO FLEE THEIR POSTS, NO MATTER HOW ARDUOUS THEIR TASKS BECOME.

WOMEN CAN'T GET INVOLVED IN THE WORKPLACE, MUCH LESS POLITICS...

BY KEEPING ONE HALF FROM WORKING, SOCIETY ENSURES THAT THE HOME IS THOROUGHLY LOOKED AFTER.

THE GROUPS THAT MAINTAINED CLEARLY DEFINED ROLES—HALF THE TRIBE AT HOME, HALF IN THE FIELDS—PRODUCED OFFSPRING MORE QUICKLY AND RELIABLY.

GREATER POPULATION BEGAT GREATER INFLUENCE. WITH EACH PASSING GENERATION, THESE GROUPS GREW MORE DOMINANT. AND SO DID THEIR VALUES.

CROPS LED TO DEFINED SETTLE-MENTS. THEY DEMANDED MANY HANDS TO WORK THE FIELDS.

AMONG COUNTLESS ANCIENT WAYS OF LIFE, ONE SUDDENLY EMERGED AS PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE.

AND JUST IN CASE YOU'RE WONDERING *WHY* THESE TWO ROLES ARE DEFINED SO RIGIDLY...

...LET US TAKE A BRIEF TRIP BACK TO THE BIRTH OF AGRICULTURE, THAT GLORIOUS INVENTION THAT MOLDED US INTO WHAT WE ARE TODAY.

IT STANDS TO REASON, THEN, THAT THIS WAY OF LIVING IS THE LOGICAL END-POINT WHEN OPTIMIZING FOR GROWTH.

BUT THE ONE THING THEY SHARE IS CLEAR ADHERENCE TO THIS SET OF TWO ROLES IN LIFE.

THERE ARE *HUNDREDS* OF RACES ACROSS THE CONTINENT.

THEY DIFFER IN APPEARANCE, LANGUAGE, CUSTOMS, AND CLIMES.

SOCIETY ENSURES THE INEVITABLE RISE OF THE HERETIC, TO WHOM IT'S ALL JUST A BIG PAIN IN THE NECK.

STILL... HOWEVER LOGICAL THE SYS-TEM MAY BE...

BY FORCING PEOPLE TO LIVE ACCORD-ING TO WHAT'S "MANLY" OR "WOMANLY"...

MANY MINDS ARGUE THAT RENOUNCE-MENT WOULD LEAD TO THE DECLINE OF CIVILIZATION ITSELF.

SEEING THE NUMBER OF KAFNA WHO AB-SORB THEMSELVES IN THEIR CAREERS AND NEVER MARRY, I SOMETIMES THINK THEIR FEARS MIGHT BE MERITED.

THE FACT THAT WE'VE GROWN SO NUMEROUS AND ADVANCED AS A SPECIES IS NO DOUBT THANKS TO OUR ADHERENCE TO THAT RULE.

THOSE WHO CANNOT BE CONTENT AS MERE ORNAMENT IN THE FAMILY TREE...

THOSE DETERMINED TO DISCOVER THEIR PURPOSE IN LIFE...

THOSE WHO WISH TO FIND THEIR LIMITS...

...OR WISH TO SHAPE THE WORLD WITH THEIR OWN TWO HANDS.

...OR STAND ABOVE THE REST...

THOSE LOOKING TO LEAVE A MARK...

...OR ESCAPE A FUTURE PLAYING THE PART OF DEVOTED WIFE.

...WISH TO PUSH THEMSELVES ABOVE AND BEYOND, IT IS THE CENTRAL LIBRARY ALONE THAT AFFORDS THEM AN ARENA.

WHEN THE HERETICS OF SOCIETY...

WOMEN DO NOT BECOME KAFNA FOR LOVE OF BOOKS.

A GOOD PORTION OF FEMALE KAFNA PERFORM THEIR DUTIES WITH A SINCERE SENSE OF RESPONSI-BILITY AND PURPOSE.

BUT I'D ARGUE THAT, FOR MOST, THOSE FEEL-INGS ARRIVED LONG *AFTER* THEIR DAYS OF STUDY AND SITTING FOR THE EXAM.

IT'S NOT LIKE THE BOOKS SHELVED IN SOME PODUNK REGIONAL LIBRARY WOULD DELVE INTO SENSITIVE TOPICS LIKE THESE.

NOT THAT I BLAME YOU. WHY *WOULD* YOU HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT THIS?

YOU DON'T HAVE THE SLIGHTEST NOTION OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HERE.

*OF THE **DETERMINA-TION** WITH WHICH EVERY EXAMINEE IN THIS ROOM FACES THE TEST.*

KAFNA WOMEN ARE BATTLE-HARDENED FROM CONSTANT WAR AGAINST EVERY EXPECTA-TION ANYONE'S EVER HAD OF THEM!

*GUYS CAN BE **HAMNA**! WHY DON'T YOU GO AFTER **THAT** JOB?!!*

FOR THE JOYS A WOMAN GAINS FROM THE CHANCE TO STUDY, SHE MUST ALSO SUFFER.

THEY'VE ENDURED DISOWNMENT BY THEIR FATHERS FOR SIMPLY DARING TO WALK THIS PATH.

THEY HAVE QUITE LITERALLY STAKED THEIR LIVELIHOODS ON THE OUT-COME.

SO THE RARE, NAÏVE SOUL WHO DOES MAKE IT ALL THE WAY HERE PURELY FOR LOVE OF THE WRITTEN WORD...WELL, THEY'RE COMING AT IT FROM A VERY DIFFERENT ANGLE.

ALLOW ME TO REGALE YOU WITH THE TALE OF A CERTAIN YOUNG GIRL.

SPEAKING OF WHICH...

...I STILL HAVEN'T REPAID YOU FOR SHARING YOUR STORY.

SHE SCURRIED THE FIELDS TO AND FRO, A PICTURE DICTIONARY ALWAYS UNDER ONE ARM.

EVERY-THING SHE WITNESSED, SHE SIMPLY HAD TO IN-VESTIGATE.

ONCE, IN A TOWN FAR AWAY...

...LIVED A LIVELY YOUNG GIRL BORN WITH A DOUBLE HELPING OF CURIOSITY.

OF PARTICULAR INTEREST WERE THE COUNTLESS STARS ADORNING THE NIGHT SKY.

SHE LEARNED THAT, AS A WOMAN, SHE'D BEEN BARRED FROM BIRTH FROM THE SCHOLAR'S PATH.

BUT REALITY SWOOPED IN, HARSH AND SWIFT.

SHE RESOLVED TO BECOME A HAMNA. SHE WOULD DEVOTE HERSELF TO THE STUDY OF THE HEAVENS.

IN TIME, THEY COMPELLED HER TO THE ACADEMIC LIFE.

...THE CAREFREE GIRL WAS GONE, HER BEAUTIFUL SMILE BRIMMING WITH CURIOSITY TO BE SEEN NEVERMORE.

AND FROM THAT DAY ON...

DESPAIR SET IN. SHE HAD DISCOVERED THE LIMITS IMPOSED UPON HER.

KRNCH

NOT TAKING IT SERIOUSLY, HM?

TO BE CONTINUED...

PERHAPS IN HER EYES...

...YOU APPEAR *UNBEARABLY* TEPID ABOUT THIS WHOLE ENDEAVOR.

UNTIL NEXT TIME, MISTER FUMIS.

PFF... スゥー

PFF... スゥー

SKRT
SKRT
SKRT
YOU REALLY OUGHT TO COME SEE THIS.
IT WOULD SEEM MISS CHAIROW SLEEPS WITH HER EYES OPEN.
A LITTLE PAYBACK FOR HURTING MY DEAR AYA.
I HAD AN ENCOUNTER WITH MISTER FUMIS TODAY. I MADE SURE TO WIND HIM UP A BIT.
...COULD THAT BOY EVER HURT ME?
HOW IN THE WORLD...
I'M GOING FOR A JOG.
WHERE ARE YOU OFF TO?
CLATTER
HE'S NOT DOING IT ON PURPOSE, YOU KNOW? HE DOESN'T MEAN ANY HARM.

THE ONLY OPTION IS TO WORK HARDER TO MAKE UP FOR IT.

YOU DON'T GET IT.

MEMORY, MENTAL ARITHMETIC, DECISION-MAKING... WOMEN AREN'T ON EQUAL FOOTING IN *ANY* ARENA.

MEN ARE OFTEN JUST PHYSICALLY STRONGER. YOU'LL COL-LAPSE IF YOU KEEP PUSHING YOURSELF SO HARD.

THERE'S NO NEED TO GET ALL BENT OUT OF SHAPE...

COME NOW. DON'T BE SO AUSTERE.

...WE HAVE TO BECOME FREE OF ALL FLAWS.

IF THERE'S ANY HOPE HOPE OF LIVING AS WE PLEASE...

THE STARS WERE OUT OF REACH. WHAT'S THE NEXT BEST THING?

...BEFORE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'VE MADE IT?

...WHAT'S IT GONNA TAKE...

UH-HUH. SO TELL ME..

IF I LOSE TO SOMEONE AS A TRAINEE, WHAT FUTURE DO I HAVE?

THAT GOES FOR NOW, TOO.

EVERY SINGLE THING I *SHOULD* BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE.

I'M GOING TO MAKE IT ALL MINE.

EVERY-THING.

I LOVE TO STUDY.

I LOVE TO WORK HARD.

I'M GOING TO DRESS NICE.

I'M GOING TO FALL IN LOVE.

I WANT THREE KIDS.

I'LL COOK.

I'LL GAMBLE.

I'LL KNIT.

I'LL TRAVEL.

I'LL DRINK AND I'LL PLAY AND I'LL HAVE IT ALL.

IF I'M TO ACHIEVE ALL THAT, I HAVE TO GIVE EVERYTHING I HAVE AND NOTHING LESS.

THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT.

I WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW.

I WANT TO TRY EVERY-THING THAT PIQUES MY CURIOSITY.

NOW THERE'S THE AYA I KNOW.

PFF...

...I TOLD YOU. I'M GOING FOR A JOG.

HOLD YOUR HORSES. IT WON'T TAKE LONG.

PFF...

AH! BY THE WAY...

I GOT MY CLUTCHES ON A MOST *FASCINATING* STORY.

THE TALE OF HOW A CERTAIN TRAINEE MADE HIS WAY HERE.

ONCE, IN A TINY VILLAGE FAR AWAY...

...LIVED A POOR, LONELY BOY WITH LONG EARS AND MIXED BLOOD...

PFF!

HUP!

'CAUSE IGNORANCE... IS A SIN!

JUST BECAUSE I DIDN'T *KNOW* ISN'T ANY EXCUSE!

HOW... COULD I BE...SO *STUPID*?!

HFF...

HFF...

HOW COULD I BE SUCH A *FOOL*?!

IF I JUST *THOUGHT IT THROUGH*, I COULD'VE PICKED A BETTER WAY TO SAY IT!

I KNEW HOW THIS WORLD WORKS!

...PUSHING *MY* VALUES ONTO HER AND MAKING HER *FEEL* BAD!

...ISN'T THAT WHY YOU BECAME A KAFNA? BECAUSE YOU LIKE BOOKS?

INSTEAD, I HAD TO BE THE BUMBLING COUNTRY BOY...

...FROM THE TANGLE OF PATHS OPEN TO ME, I COMMITTED MYSELF TO ONE.

DOESN'T THAT DEDICATION COUNT FOR SOME-THING?!

I WAS IN THE WRONG ON THAT POINT. I ADMIT IT.

...

STILL ...

IT *CAN'T* BE!

CAN IT ...?

THAT'S NOT WHY I'M BEHIND!

NOT BECAUSE I HAVEN'T BEEN TAKING THIS SERIOUSLY!

THE ONLY REASON I'M BEHIND IS BECAUSE I HAVEN'T HAD AS MANY HOURS AT A DESK AS THE REST OF THEM!

P-TMP

...STOP TREATING ME LIKE A CHILD.

IF YOU GET LOST, *I'M* THE ONE WHO HAS TO GO OUT LOOKING, YOU KNOW?

JUST MAKE SURE YOU STICK CLOSE TO THE DORM.

SUCH A HANDFUL...

AYA, AYA, AYA...

JOLT

POP

TMP

BUT WHY?!

HOW COME?!

TELL ME!

I WANNA KNOW...!

WHY DO BABIES COME OUT OF MOMMIES' BELLIES?

HOW COME BIRDS CAN FLY?

WHY ARE FLOWERS SHAPED LIKE THAT?

WHEN I GROW UP, I'M GONNA STUDY THE STARS!

I'LL BE A HAMNA AND FIND STARS THAT HAVE NEVER BEEN NAMED!

BUT DON'T TELL DAD! IT'S STILL A SECRET.

BIG SIS! I'VE MADE UP MY MIND!

WHY IS THE SKY SO FULL OF LIGHT...

...WHEN IT'S NIGHT-TIME?

LISTEN TO ME, AYA. THERE AREN'T ANY GIRL SCHOLARS, **NONE!**

IT'S NOT A MATTER OF HOW HARD YOU TRY.

I KNOW THERE AREN'T MANY GIRL HAMNA.

BUT I'LL STUDY HARD SO I CAN MAKE IT!

OH, AYA!

YOU'RE SUCH A GOOF. WOMEN CAN'T BE SCHOLARS.

HA HA HA!

TO BE A HAMNA, YOU'D HAVE TO START AS AN APPRENTICE. BUT NOBODY TAKES GIRLS ON.

WOMEN ARE BANNED FROM THE INSTITUTES. YOU'LL NEVER EVEN BE ABLE TO SET FOOT INSIDE OF ONE, LET ALONE STUDY THERE!

BUT WHY...?

WAA

A

A

AH!

A

AH!

A

A

AH!

AH!

A

A

...THEY HAVE A GIANT TELESCOPE THAT CAN OBSERVE ALL THE HEAVENS!

DID YOU KNOW? AT THE KOULEUR INSTITUTE IN KALAR, CITY OF THE STARS...

...AND SEE ALL THE STARS WITH MY OWN TWO EYES!

YOU'LL SEE! I'M GONNA BECOME A HAMNA...

AH!

A

A

A

I'LL NEVER KNOW THEM MORE INTIMATELY THAN THE WOODBLOCK PRINTS IN THE PAGES OF MY DICTIONARY.

I'LL NEVER SEE THE SPARKLING SURFACES OF PE'AWEA, THE TWIN MOONS THAT LIGHT THE SKY.

...AND APPRECIATE THEIR BEAUTY WITH MY OWN EYES.

ALL I WANTED WAS TO PEER THROUGH THE LENS OF A TELESCOPE...

NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY...

...I'LL NEVER BE A SCHOLAR.

...WILL EVER STAY JUST THAT.

BUT THAT DREAM...

I HAVE TO SHOW THEM.

FWIP

THEY'LL SEE.

...THAT THE GIRL KNOWN AS AYA GUUNJOH CAN'T MASTER!

THERE'S NOT A SINGLE THING IN THIS WORLD...

JOLT
ヒクッ

GRK ...!

HUP ...!

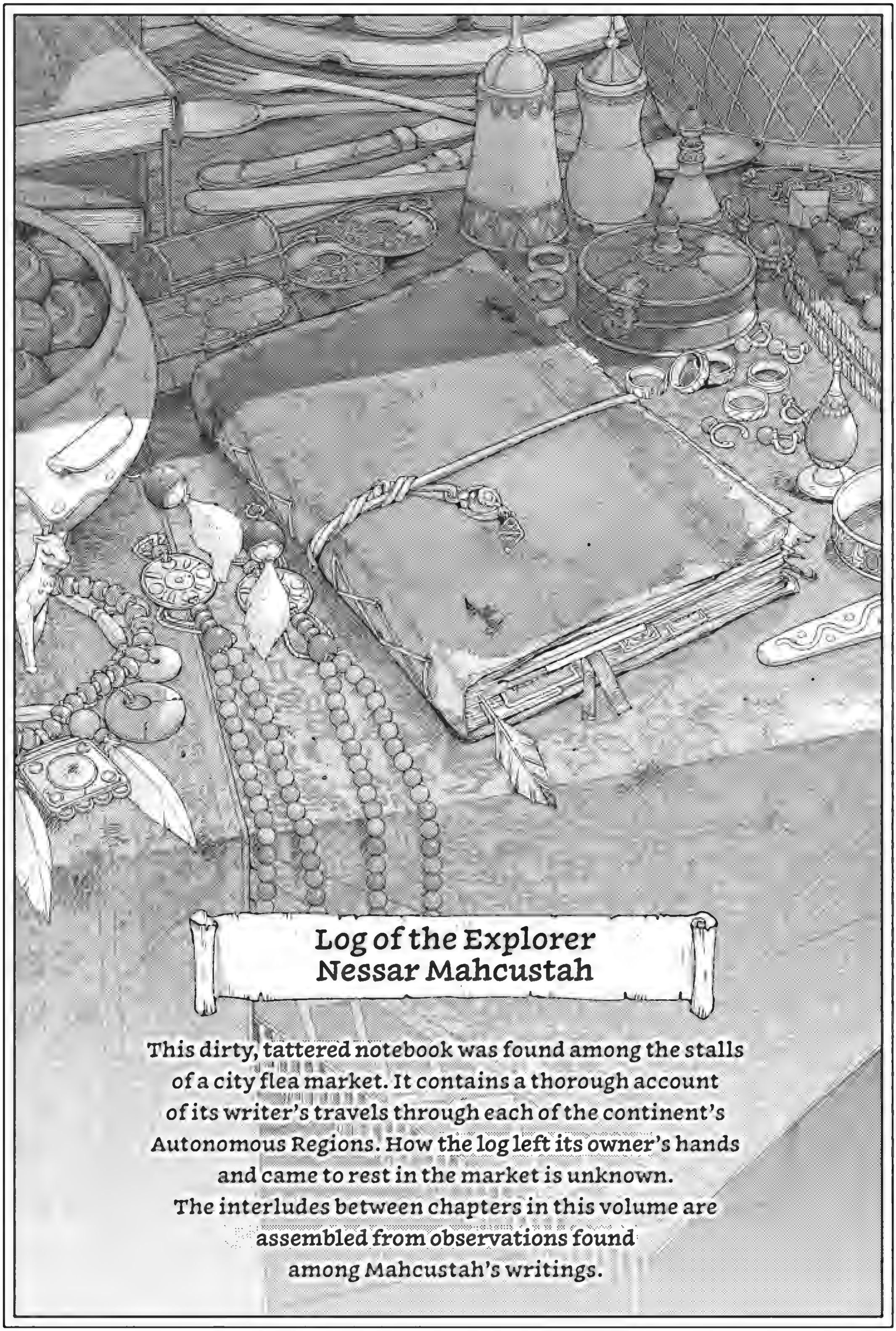
HFF ...

HFF ...

...

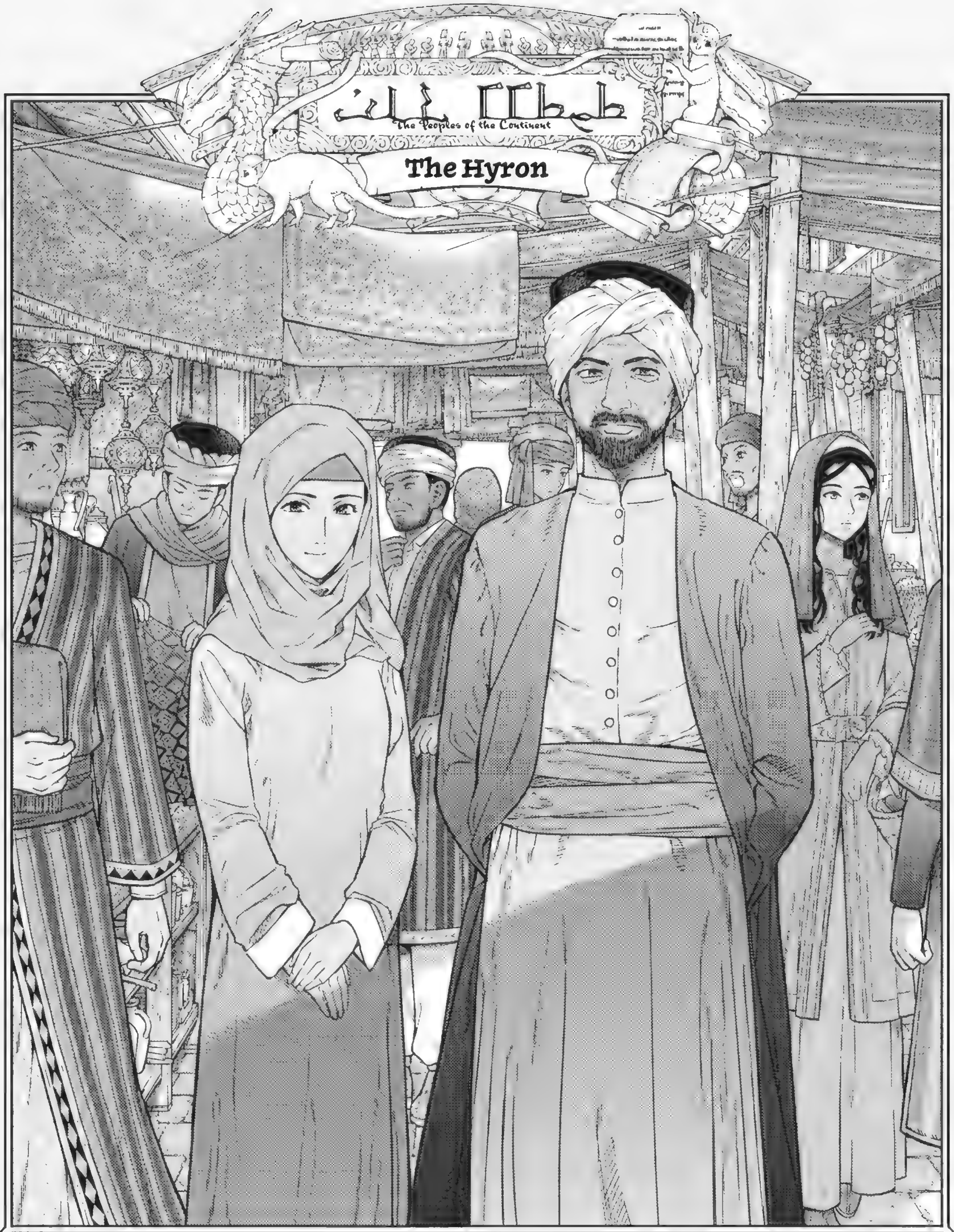
GRK ...!

HFF!


Log of the Explorer
Nessar Mahcustah
This dirty, tattered notebook was found among the stalls
of a city flea market. It contains a thorough account
of its writer's travels through each of the continent's
Autonomous Regions. How the log left its owner's hands
and came to rest in the market is unknown.
The interludes between chapters in this volume are
assembled from observations found
among Mahcustah's writings.

The Peoples of the Continent

The Hyron



[Classification] Istayuv Family

Peoples native to the continent's vast, arid expanses, exhibiting light brown skin and rounded ears. Other subclassifications include the Hydiah, the Savana, and the Ramato.

[Faith] Asin, Manaccha | **[Color] Green** | **[Temperament] Studious and Thrifty**

The Hyron are a people whose beginnings lie in the founding of the Asin religion by the Jagwa. The name "Hyron" means "the noble ones," and green, the color this group uses to represent its culture, is symbolic of prosperity in Asin.

One can acquire anything in the Hyron bazaars...
...save for heritage, character, and proper women. (Words overheard in a Hyron market)

IT LOOKS LIKE A BUTTERFLY, BUT IT'S ACTUALLY A BIRD!

THAT'S A BUTTER-FAUX!

SOMETIMES IT'S CALLED THE "SLEEPING PRINCESS." I THOUGHT I'D GET SLEEPY IF I ATE SOME, BUT INSTEAD IT JUST MADE MY TONGUE TINGLY!

THIS IS THOUSAND PURSE!

IT ALWAYS GROWS IN PAIRS. ONE SIDE IS SWEET AND YUMMY, AND THE OTHER IS REALLY BITTER!

THIS IS A TOAD-SCALE!

KEK, KEK, KEK!

KEK, KEK, KEK!

IT'S A KIND OF WOOD SPIRIT THAT'S ALWAYS LAUGHING!

THAT'S A GAWKER OVER THERE!

HFF...

SO, TELL ME...

...HOW DO WE GET HOME?

AMAZING. YOU KNOW EVERYTHING, AYA.

HFF...

CHE

CHE

CHE

KEK, KEK, KEK!

KEK, KEK, KEK!

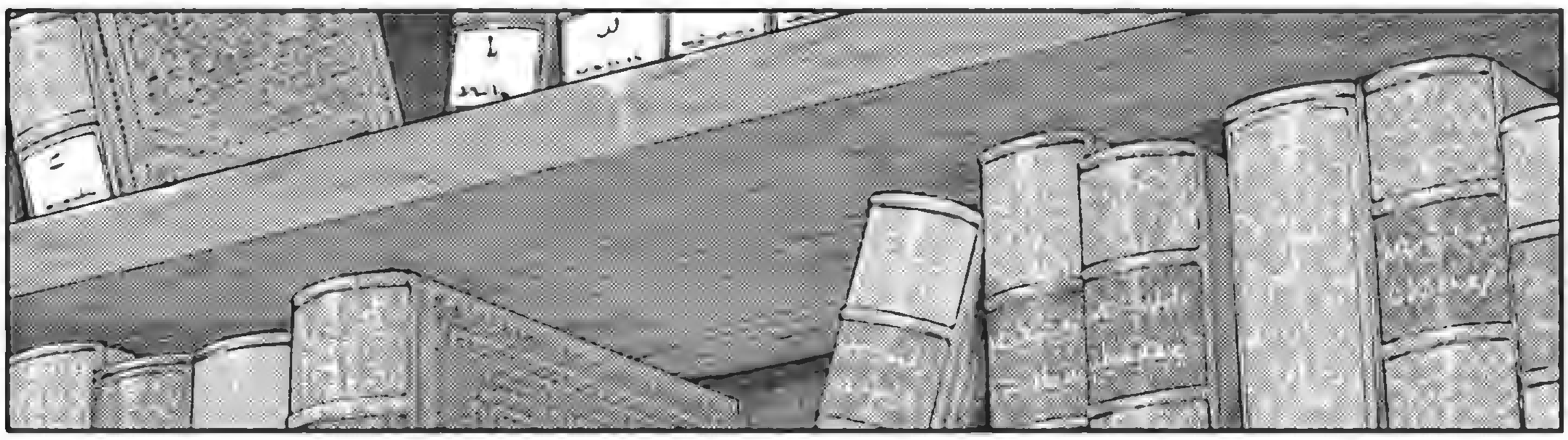
...

I HAVE NO IDEA.

21 A Girl Captivated by the Stars











I THOUGHT FOR SURE...

...I'D FIND AT LEAST ONE NAME.

BUT WITHOUT MORE KNOWLEDGE AND TIME, THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH GROUND I CAN COVER...

NOTHING.

TAAA

TAARUP

...THERE'S SOMEONE I'M LOOKING FOR.

...

WELL, ACTUALLY...

?

THEO! YOU'RE UP EARLY.

OH, MY!

WHAT'S GOT YOU AWAKE AT THIS HOUR?

GOOD MORNING, PROFESSOR EDAN.

SOME PEOPLE ARE BORN WITH EVERY-THING.

HMPH.

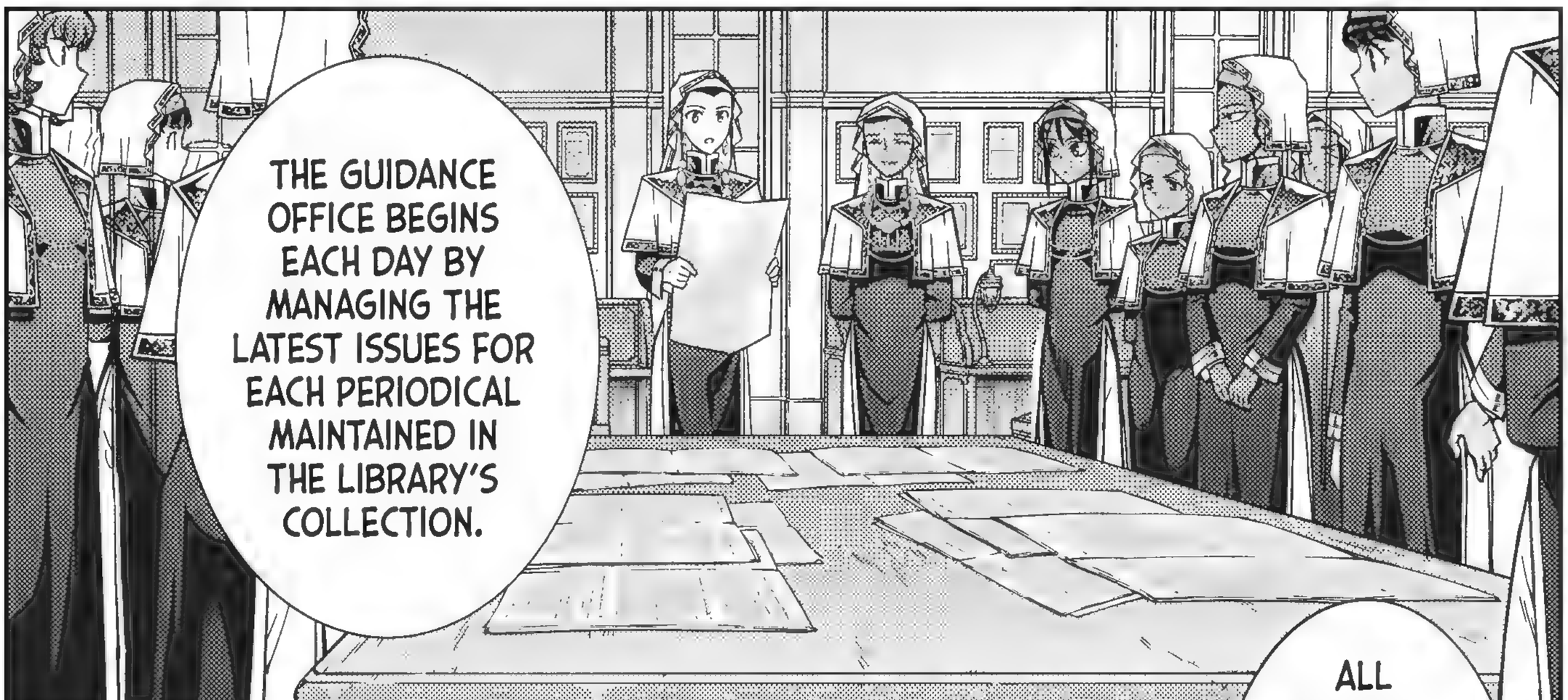
I'M SERIOUSLY STARTING TO DOUBT MISS GUUNJOH HAS *ANY* SHORT-COMINGS.

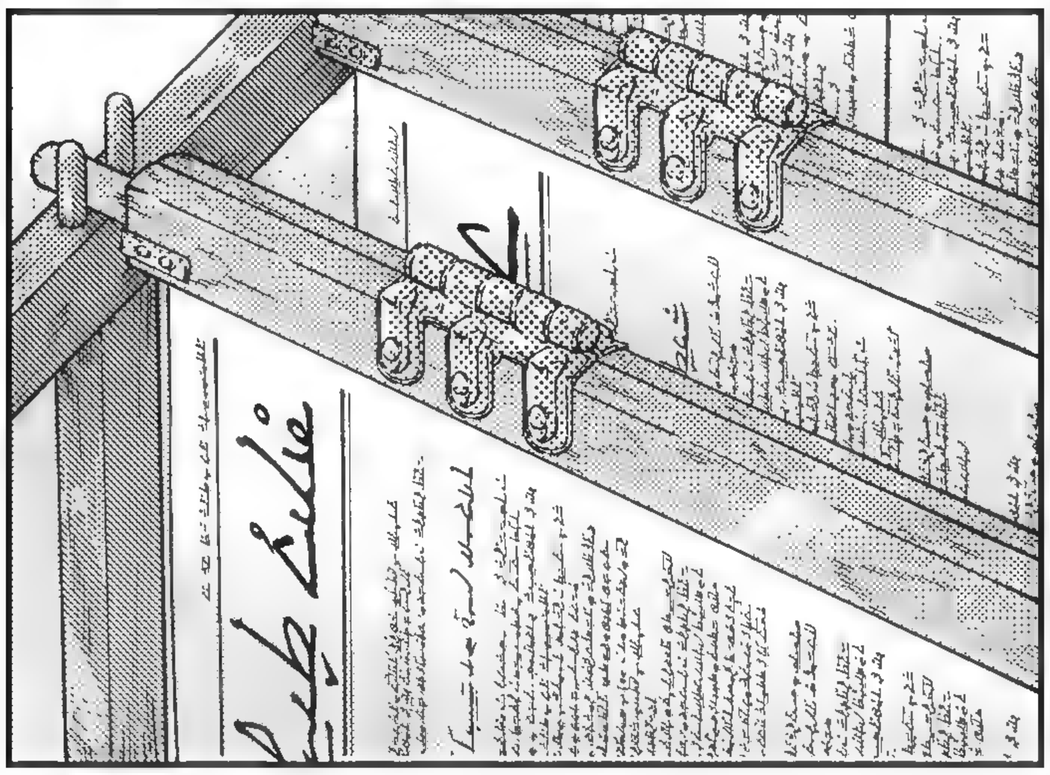
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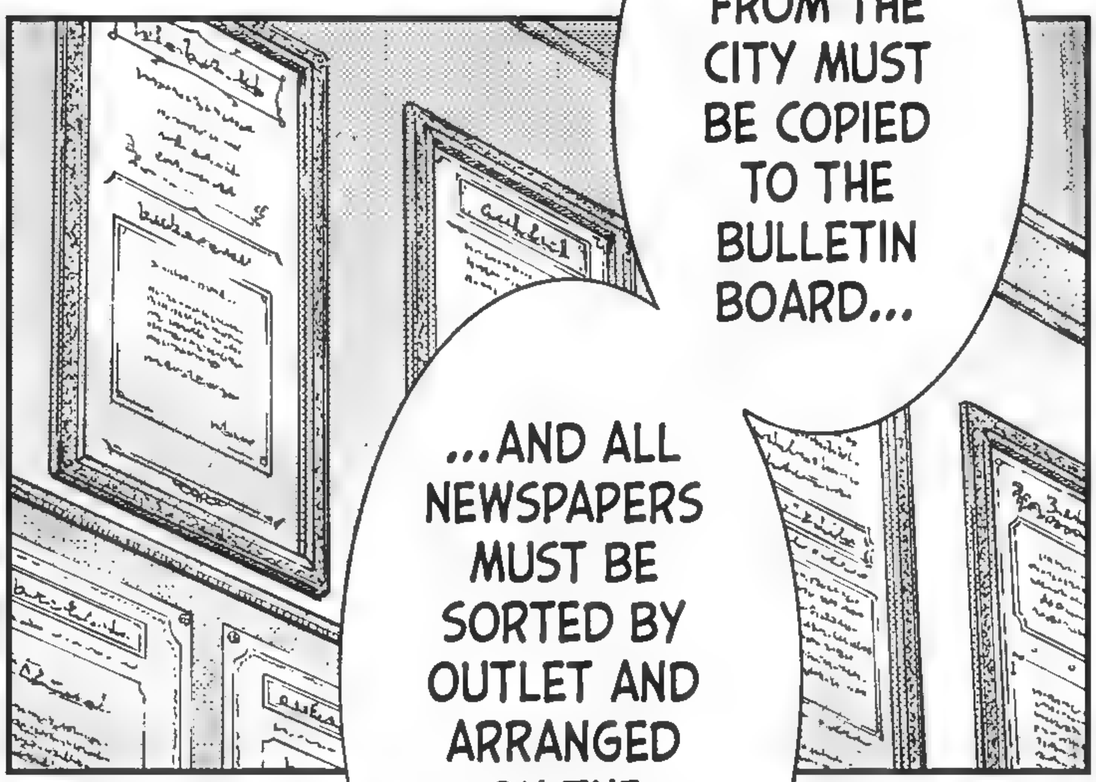
KRNCH

"




THE GUIDANCE OFFICE BEGINS EACH DAY BY MANAGING THE LATEST ISSUES FOR EACH PERIODICAL MAINTAINED IN THE LIBRARY'S COLLECTION.




ALL NOTICES FROM THE CITY MUST BE COPIED TO THE BULLETIN BOARD...
...AND ALL NEWSPAPERS MUST BE SORTED BY OUTLET AND ARRANGED ON THE VIEWING RACKS.


OLD EDITIONS ARE THEN CARRIED TO THE SHELVES, WHERE THEY ARE ARRANGED BY DATE, AND...

These ones too, please.

EXCUSE ME! TRAINEES!

WE COULD USE AN EXTRA HAND CARRYING SOME MATERIALS. WOULD ONE OF YOU MIND?

I'M STARV-ING!

WHEW! IT'S *FINALLY* LUNCH-TIME.

NOTICE HOW GUID-ANCE NEVER CLAIMED THAT IT WAS THE BACKBONE?

...

!

YOU THERE. COULD YOU PLEASE HELP US?

...OF COURSE, MA'AM.

OH! YOU REPRESENTED THE TRAINEES AT THE PLENUM!

UM! I'D LIKE TO HELP, TOO!

HM? NO THANKS. WE JUST NEED ONE MORE PERSON.

It's really not that heavy.

AH! THEO!

Glad I caught you!

PROFESSOR AIKO?

I CAN HARDLY KEEP MY EYES OPEN AFTER LUNCH.

UGH... NEXT UP IS LECTURE HOUR.

OH, WOW!!

PROFESSOR EDAN ASKED ME TO PASS THIS ALONG TO YOU.

What was that about?

I'VE FOUND MY OPENING! NOW ALL I GOTTA DO IS USE IT!

ALL RIGHT!

I WAS SURPRISED YOU'D EVEN HEARD OF THEM.

AN AUTOBIOG-RAPHY?! THIS IS MORE THAN I COULD'VE HOPED FOR!

I JUST FIGURED MAYBE THERE WAS SOMEONE LIKE THIS IN THE WORLD. PROFESSOR EDAN DID THE REST.

WELL, I HADN'T REALLY...

UM...

WHERE'S MISS GUUNJOH?

MISTER FUMIS. HEY.

OH! HELLO, MISS MIDOREEN!

THAT'S WHAT I'M TRYING TO FIGURE OUT. ANY IDEA?

HUH?

YES. EXACTLY.

...SHE WAS HELPING THE GUIDANCE OFFICE TEACHERS CARRY SOME MATERIALS AFTER CLASS.

THE LAST I SAW...

NO. IT WAS JUST HER.

BUT THERE WERE OTHER TRAINEES, TOO, RIGHT?

YEAH. I THINK SO.

SHE WENT WITH THEM TO THEIR OFFICE?

WHAT?! WHY?!

TRUTH IS... IT'S NOT SAFE FOR AYA TO BE ON HER OWN. AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT...

DOES SHE HAVE SOME KIND OF HEALTH CONDI-TION?!

HUH?! WHAT'S WRONG ?!

BLAST. THIS IS BAD.

TKK

SHE COULD END UP LOST.

THAT GIRL HAS *ZERO* SENSE OF DIRECTION.

Guidance Office

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!

SORRY TO USE UP YOUR LUNCH BREAK.

YOU CAN HEAD BACK NOW.

IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?

...NO. I'M FINE.

ALL RIGHT. TAKE CARE!

...C'MON.

THE FACT THAT SHE'S NOT HERE EVEN THOUGH BREAK'S OVER AND CLASS IS ABOUT TO-

...SHE'S GOT HER REPUTATION AS TOP OF THE INCOMING CLASS TO THINK ABOUT.

AYA GOES TO GREAT LENGTHS TO KEEP IT HIDDEN. AND NOW, NOT ONLY IS SHE A KAFNA...

IF SHE REALLY *IS* LOST, I GOTTA FIND HER BEFORE SHE'S LATE!

GREAT MAGUS, CLASS IS ABOUT TO START!

SURELY IT'S NOT *THAT* BAD.

SHE CAN JUST ASK SOME OF THE OLDER KAFNA FOR HELP. THEY'LL POINT THE WAY.

DOUBTFUL. I BET SHE'S WANDERING THE HALLS AS WE SPEAK.

TMP TMP TMP

MAYBE IT'S BETTER IF SHE THINKS I DON'T KNOW.

OR... HANG ON.

YOU SIT TIGHT IN CLASS. ACT LIKE YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S UP.

YEAH, PROBABLY.

SHE'S PROBABLY CRYING IN A CORNER RIGHT ABOUT NOW.

I HAVE TO GO LOOK FOR HER.

WAIT! I'LL GO WITH YOU!

TMP

GLANCE GLANCE

THAT MEANS WE CAN'T INFORM THE PRO-FESSOR...

...AND THE LATER IT GETS, THE HARDER IT'LL BE TO EXPLAIN THIS AWAY WITHOUT RAISING SUSPICIONS.

?

MISS GUUNJOH DOESN'T WANT WORD TO GET OUT ABOUT HER SENSE OF DIRECTION.

FWIP

?!

I CHANGED MY MIND! I'M HELPING!

IF WE PULL THIS OFF, WE CAN MINIMIZE THE DAMAGE!

...HELP HER GET BACK AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

I ALREADY KNOW HER SECRET, AND THAT CAN'T BE UNDONE. SO THE BEST THING FOR ME TO DO IS...

COME ON! HURRY !!

YOU'LL PROB-ABLY GET MARKED DOWN FOR BEING LATE TOO!

YOU SURE?

EXACTLY HOW OFTEN DOES SHE GET LOST?

BACK HOME, IT WAS ALMOST DAILY.

HER CURIOSITY WOULD SEND HER CHASING AFTER A STRANGE BUTTERFLY OR SOMETHING...

JUST AS I FEARED. THEY SAY SHE HEADED BACK ON HER OWN.

...

...

I...CAN TOTALLY IMAGINE HER DOING THAT, YEAH.

INSTEAD, SHE CHARGES AHEAD SO IT LOOKS LIKE SHE KNOWS WHAT SHE'S DOING.

YOU'D THINK SHE MIGHT SLOW DOWN AND LOOK AROUND ONCE SHE REALIZES SHE'S LOST.

SHHHF

RTTL RTTL

WOW. YOU REALLY HAD IT ROUGH LOOKING AFTER HER...

LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED. THE LAST PLACE YOU'D EXPECT TO FIND HER, THAT'S WHERE SHE'LL BE!

ANYWAY, WE BETTER SPLIT UP.

SEEMS WE'RE MISSING A FEW TODAY.

PHEW! I THINK I ATE TOO MUCH.

MAYBE I OUGHTA CATCH A QUICK NAP.

FWIP

Listen to this!

SLUMP ズー

...!

...!

TIME TO GET BACK TO WORK!

OH, DID YOU HEAR ?

THEY'RE CONSIDERING A PUB BAN ON *MULLIGAD!*

YOU DON'T SAY!

OH, WAIT TILL YOU GET THIS!

WHAT EVER HAPPENED WITH THE THIRD–

YOU KNOW, THERE'S A THEORY THAT WOMEN'S MINDS AREN'T AS SUITED TO CONCEPTUALIZING SPACE...

HEY, SO YOU GOT LOST. NO BIG DEAL!

TOP OF HER CLASS, BUT SHE CAN'T EVEN FIND HER WAY AROUND?

WHY DIDN'T YOU ASK FOR HELP SOONER?

AREN'T YOU LATE FOR YOUR LESSONS?

A GUIDANCE HOPEFUL WITH NO SENSE OF DIRECTION?

WHEN DID I BECOME...

...SUCH A COWARD?

HFF...

HFF...

I HID MY SHORTCOMINGS ALONG WITH MY EMBARRASSMENT...

I KEPT EVERYONE AROUND ME AT ARM'S LENGTH SO THEY'D NEVER DISCOVER THE WEAKLING I TRULY AM.

"THERE'S NOT A SINGLE THING I CAN'T DO"?

SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY, IT STOPPED BEING ABOUT PROVING A POINT. IT TURNED INTO AN EXERCISE OF BUILDING MYSELF UP INTO MORE THAN I AM.

IT'S JUST THAT...

...I WANTED TO TURN OUT THIS WAY.

IT'S NOT LIKE...

TMP

...I JUST...

CLASS STARTED MINUTES AGO.

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?

I HARDLY KNOW THE COMPLEX YET MYSELF.

AT THIS RATE, I'M GOING TO END UP LOST, TOO.

HFFFF

I KNOW MISS GUUNJOH'S MANA. I'VE SEEN IT BEFORE.

RIGHT.

In the Ki faith, it is called the ozma. In Asin, the matla. The concept was common to all religions.

In short, it referred to the phenomenon whereby mana inside a being is visualized through spiritual concentration.

Among the teachings of Manaccha was the idea of an aura.

...!

IF BY SOME CHANCE SHE'S NEARBY...

...AND HOPING FOR SOMEONE TO FIND HER...

I'VE NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT TRYING TO VISUALIZE IT...

C'MON. SHOW UP, SHOW UP, SHOW UP.

SOMETHING TELLS ME THAT LINE EMBODIES EVERYTHING SHE IS.

JUST BRIEFLY, DURING THE THIRD STAGE OF THE EXAM— IT WAS A GORGEOUS LINE THAT SEEMED TO STRETCH STRAIGHT TO THE HEAVENS.

FWAH

I JUST...

...WANTED TO KNOW WHY.

WHY BIRDS SING...

...AND HOW THEIR VOICES REACH OUR EARS.

...OR WHY THE COLOR BLUE LOOKS THE WAY IT DOES.

WHY THE SKY IS BLUE...

...NEVER CEASES TO CAPTIVATE MY MIND.

WHY THE THRILL OF THE UNKNOWN...

THE SUN THAT SINKS BEHIND THE HORIZON.

THE TWINKLING OF THE NIGHTTIME STARS.

THE OLIVES THAT FALL TO THE GROUND.

THE FRAGRANCE OF THE FLOWERS.

I WANTED TO KNOW, THAT'S ALL.

EVEN THE FEAR OF DEATH.

THE MIRACLE OF BIRTH.

THE MYSTERIES OF LOVE.

THE MEANING OF LIFE.

I SIMPLY WANTED TO KNOW WHY THIS WORLD...

...IS SO BEAUTIFUL.

MISS GUUNJOH ...!

NO. I CAN'T.

UM! I JUST HAPPENED TO BE...

B-DMP

I... I'M FINE.

B-DMP

B-DMP

B-DMP

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!

YOU'RE NOT FEELING ILL, ARE YOU?!

M-MORE IMPOR-TANTLY...

...WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?

...!

THE TRUTH IS, MISS MIDOREEN TOLD ME EVERY-THING.

...LIVED A POOR, LONELY BOY WITH LONG EARS AND MIXED BLOOD...

ONCE, IN A TINY VILLAGE FAR AWAY...

...!

MISS MIDOREEN'S LOOKING FOR YOU, TOO!

BUT I'LL EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED LATER. THE THREE OF US NEED TO GET TO CLASS!

I MEAN, WOULD YOU MIND...

...IF I TOOK A LOOK AT YOUR HANDS, PLEASE?

WAIT...

COULD I...

OVER HERE! I FOUND HER!

SHE ALWAYS HAS TO STICK HER NOSE-

OH... YEAH. I USED TO WORK ON A MASONRY CREW.

MONEY WAS PRETTY TIGHT AT HOME, SO...

...?

さすRUB

THEY'RE AWFULLY ROUGH.

さすRUB

...

MY... HANDS?

I SHOULD HAVE NEVER SAID THOSE THINGS.

I'M SO ASHAMED OF MY-SELF.

I...

THANKS TO MY FAMILY, I'VE NEVER HAD TO WORRY ABOUT MONEY.

IT WASN'T RIGHT OF ME. YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH, AND HERE I AM...

...QUES-TIONING YOUR COMMIT-MENT.

FWIP

O-OH!

YOUR HAND! I'M... I'M SORRY.

NO!

...!

UM!

IT WAS THOUGHT-LESS, SORRY.

OH. IT'S... IT'S FINE. REALLY.

REALLY, *I* SHOULD BE THE ONE APOLOGIZ-ING.

I DIDN'T STOP TO THINK ABOUT WHAT MIGHT'VE MADE YOU WANT TO BE A KAFNA.

THE FEMALE KAFNA WHOSE INCREDIBLE SKILLS AT HANDLING INFORMATION CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF THE HAMNA MEAMEYI...

...LEADING TO SPECIAL PERMISSION TO VISIT HIS INSTITUTE AS SHE PLEASED AND CONDUCT RESEARCH JUST LIKE ANY SCHOLAR!

HAVE YOU EVER ...

UM... I MEAN... OF *COURSE* YOU'VE HEARD OF HER!

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF ZOHILOTE QUENNECH?!

I JUST THOUGHT THAT MAYBE AS A KAFNA...

...IF WORD SPREAD ABOUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE STARS, MAYBE SOMEDAY YOU'D BE INVITED TO AN INSTITUTE WITH A BIG TELESCOPE, AND...

SORRY. I DID IT AGAIN, TALKING ABOUT THINGS THAT ARE NONE OF MY BUSINESS.

...THANK YOU.

BUT REALLY, IT'S FINE.

YES, AT FIRST I CHOSE THIS PATH OUT OF SPITE. BUT THAT'S NOT HOW I FEEL ANYMORE.

...BETWEEN EVERY LETTER AND WORD...

...A WHOLE HOST OF GLITTERING UNKNOWNS.

STARS SLEEPING AMONG THE PAGES...

THAT'S HERE, TOO.

WHAT DREW ME TO THE STARS IN THE FIRST PLACE...

...WAS THEIR *MYSTERY*. THE FACT THAT SO MUCH IS STILL UNKNOWN.

RIGHT HERE, IN THE LIBRARY'S VAST, ENDLESS SKY.

AND ONCE I REALIZED THAT...

...I KNEW I WANTED NOTHING MORE THAN TO LIVE MY LIFE OUT HERE, IN *THIS* SKY.

TOUCHING. BUT COULD YOU TWO HURRY IT UP?

FLINCH

R-RIGHT! WE GOTTA GET TO CLASS!

I'M SURE IT'S ALREADY STARTED. COME ON!

HEH, HEH ...

AYA, AYA, AYA...

EVER THE HANDFUL...

YOU WANT TO BECOME A KAFNA, TOO?

TRUST ME, I'M AWARE.

BUT I CAN'T JUST LET YOU HEAD OFF ALONE. I'D BE SICK WITH WORRY.

BUT KANA...

IT'S NOT EASY. IT TAKES A LOT OF HARD WORK TO WIN A SPOT AS A TRAINEE.

...TO MAKE SURE YOU KNOW THE WAY HOME?

I MEAN, WHO ELSE IS GONNA BE THERE...

...THAT'S CORRECT.

...TO THE GUIDANCE OFFICE, RIGHT?

BY THE WAY, YOU SAID YOU'RE HOPING FOR ASSIGNMENT...

WE MIGHT NEED TO COME UP WITH A FEW TRICKS FOR YOU TO DEPLOY...

...!

'CAUSE THIS LIBRARY IS *HUGE!*

TAK

MAY WE COME IN?

S...

SORRY WE'RE LATE.

TAK カ…

...AND AS YOU CAN SEE...

TAK カ…

TAK カ…

...THIS IS THE CASE WITH...

TAK カ…

TRMBL ガタガタ TRMBL TRMBL ガタガタ TRMBL TRMBL カ… カ… ク TRMBL

U-UM...! UH...!

Eep! She's furious!

…

WE, UM...

WE...

EXPLAIN YOURSELVES.

SEE, THE THING IS...

Y...

YEAH! IT'S MY FAULT!

I GOT LOST IN THE MAIN COMPLEX AFTER LUNCH...

...AND THESE TWO...

Alv? Why?!

C'MON, BLONDIE. OUT WITH IT.

WHAT DID YOU DO *THIS* TIME?

THESE TWO CAME TO FIND ME. IT'S *MY* FAULT THEY'RE LATE!

FWIP

TH...

THAT'S NOT TRUE!!

I'M THE ONE WHO GOT LOST!

IT'S NOT UNCOMMON FOR NEW TRAINEES TO LOSE THEIR WAY AMONG THE LIBRARY'S HALLS.

I ONLY ASK THAT YOU BE MORE CAREFUL IN THE FUTURE, AND THAT WHEN YOU NEED HELP, TO PLEASE REQUEST IT.

NOW, HURRY TO YOUR SEATS.

I NEVER WOULD HAVE...

PFFT! SHE GOT *LOST* ?!

WHOA. REALLY?

WOW. EVEN MISS GUUNJOH HAS FLAWS.

I'M SORRY. I'M BAD AT DIRECTIONS...

...AND I OFTEN GET LOST.

ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER CHANCE TO GIVE IT MY ALL!

HERE WE GO!

FWIP

MISS GUUNJOH!

WOW!

!

GOOD MORNING, YOU.

G...

GOOD MOR-



BUT--

THAT'S WAY TOO MUCH, DUDE. LIKE A CREEPY OLD MAN.

Just flick it and be done.

UM!

OH!

YOU KNOW, AYA IS BASICALLY CURIOSITY INCARNATE.

IF YOU OPEN UP A DICTIONARY TO THE WORD, YOU'LL FIND HER FACE AT THE TOP OF THE ENTRY.

OH! HELLO, MISS MIDOREEN!

Good morning to you, too!

YES. HI, MISTER FUMIS.

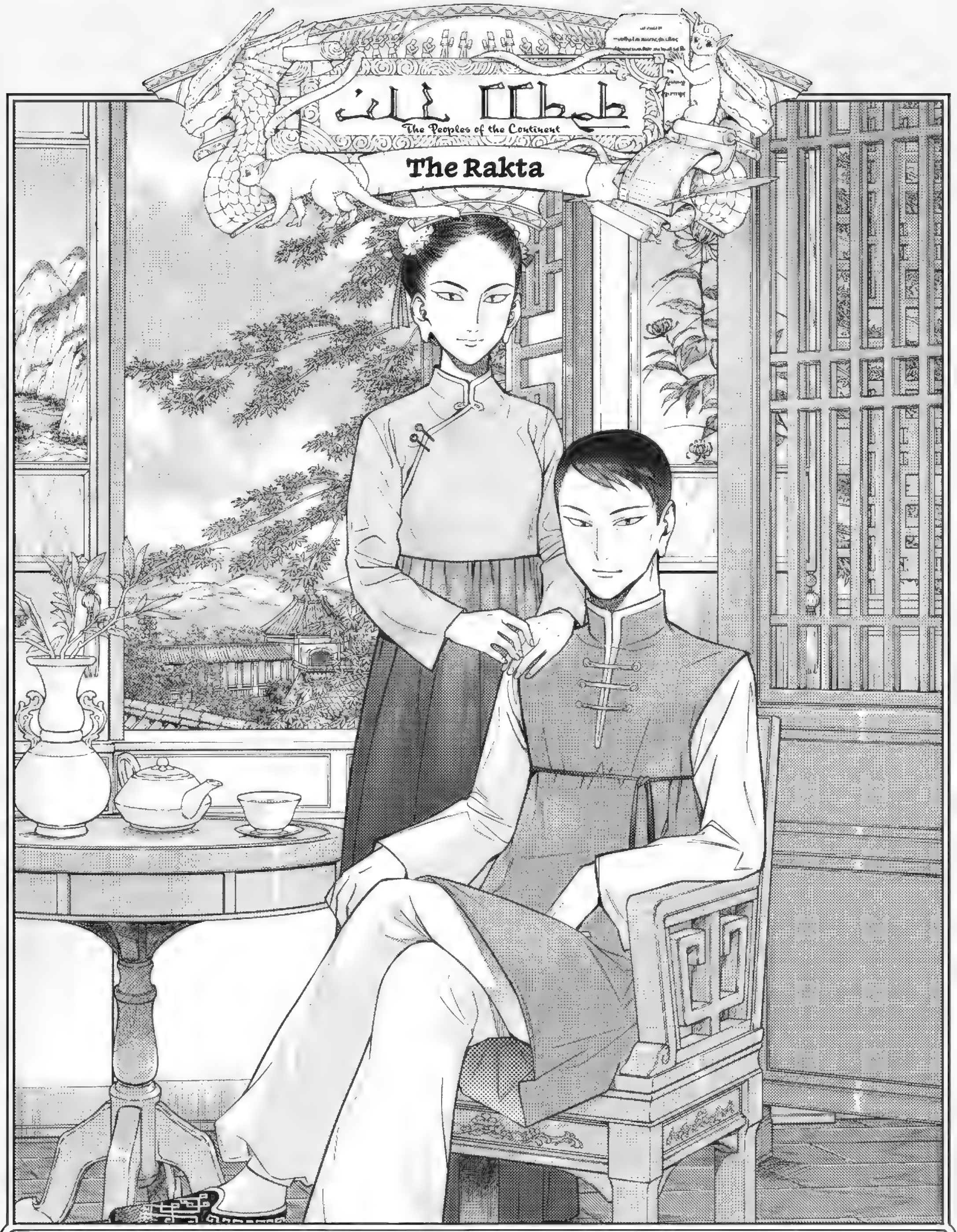
YOU MIGHT FIND YOU'VE TAKEN ON FAR MORE THAN YOU BARGAINED FOR WITH THIS ONE.

?

SO BE ON YOUR TOES.

The Peoples of the Continent

The Rakta



[Classification] Tana Family

Peoples originally centered around the coastal areas of the continent, typically exhibiting long earlobes. Other subclassifications include the Maer, Jupee, and Satoor.

[Faith] Manaccha | **[Color] Blue** | **[Temperament] Proud and Industrious**

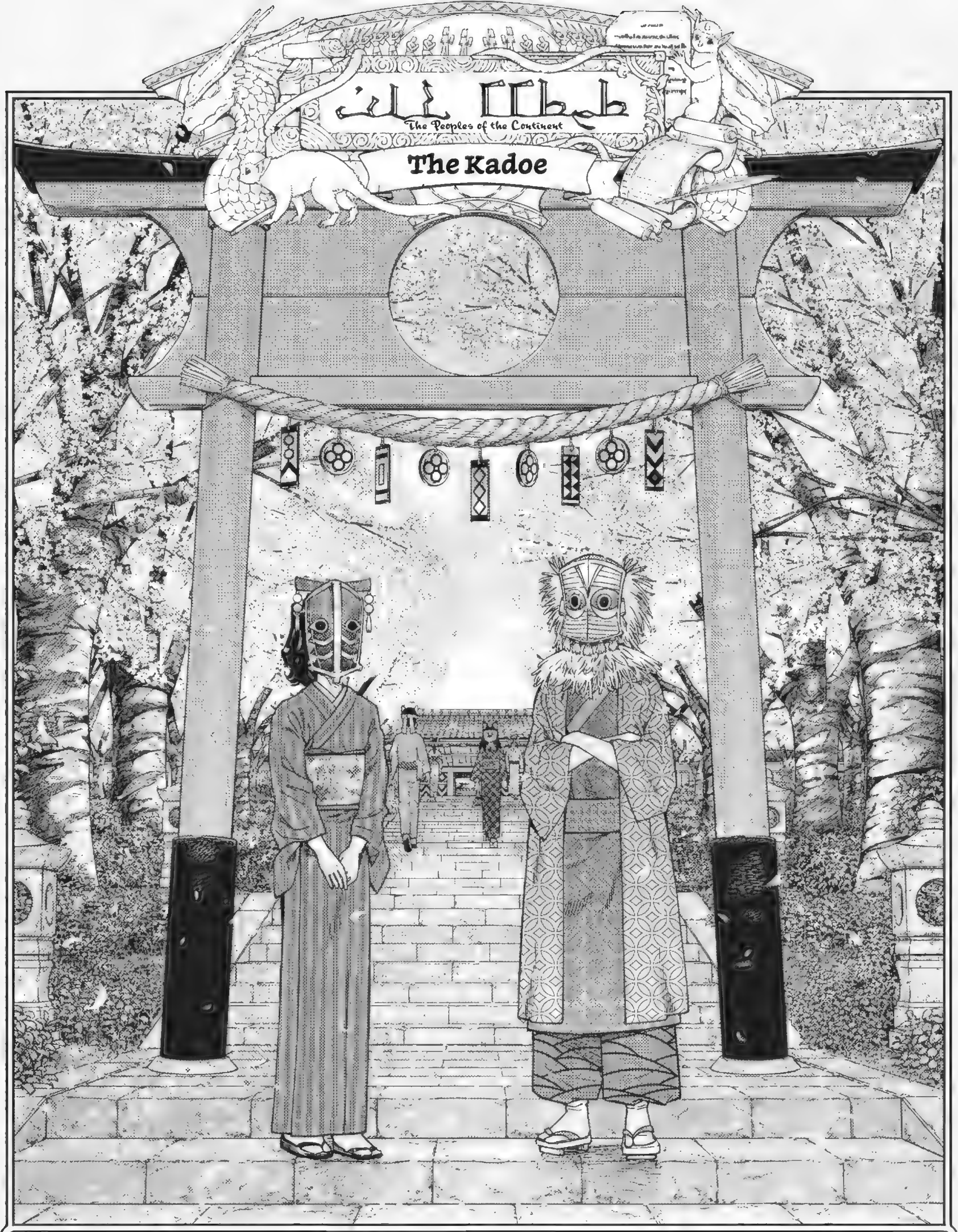
The Rakta are a collective originally formed by the San and Mun peoples in response to the encroaching Kadoe Empire. The name "Rakta" means "family," and the color blue signifies a longing to return to their coastal homelands.

A Rakta man works hard, barks orders, and isn't afraid to slap his wife.
A Rakta woman serves attentively, does as she's told, and isn't afraid to stab her husband with a kitchen knife.

(Aphorism on display in a Rakta home)

The Peoples of the Continent

The Kadoe



[Classification] Omeka Family

Horned peoples originally hailing from the continent's mountainous regions. Other subclassifications include the Nambi, Tass, and Sooni.

[Faith] Ki | **[Color] Red** | **[Temperament] Kind and Crafty**

The Kadoe are a mask-wearing people who once conquered the majority of the continent. The name "Kadoe" means "equality," and their color, red, is believed to ward off the dangers of the afterlife.

The Kadoe will urge you to take your time. Don't accept those words at face value. If you dawdle on the stairway, they'll grow impatient and push you the rest of the way down.

(Cautionary advice offered at a Ki temple)



22 A Teacher's Winning Formula

IT'S PERFECTLY REASONABLE TO EXPECT US TO KEEP OUR OWN LIVING AREA TIDY!

COMPLETELY ILLOGICAL.

THERE'S NOTHING PRODUCTIVE ABOUT THE ACT OF CLEANING.

I DON'T BELIEVE THIS.

CAN'T WE LEAVE THE CLEANING TO THE KOHKWA?

FLIT

テキパキ

FLIT

テキパキ

AHH. THIS IS NICE, TOO. I BET I'D LIKE THE FACILITIES OFFICE.

HEY, THEO? YOU'VE DONE A GREAT JOB. GO AHEAD AND PACK UP.

OUT OF THE QUESTION!

...

HOW ABOUT WE JUST LEAVE THE CLEANING TO *HIM*?

TMP

...AND SHISHIDO GLYN NEVER LEARNED TO WRITE. HE DICTATED THE ENTIRETY OF *THE WORLDWORM* TO HIS WIFE.

KA LARFUL WAS THE CONTINENT'S FIRST SERIALIZED NOVEL...

TMP

DERRICK DAN BAL'S *SYMPHONY OF SPIRITS* LED TO HIS EXCOM-MUNICATION FROM THE KI FAITH.

HFF ...

XCANYL'S BEST-KNOWN WORK, *OPULENCE AND PRIDE*, WASN'T PUBLISHED UNTIL AFTER HIS DEATH.

THREE MORE LAPS, PEOPLE!

HFF...

KRNCH

KRNCH

PFF...

WHEW...

KRNCH

OUT OF ALL THE HAMNA IN HISTORY, I ADMIRE TAKUMI GALE MOST, INVENTOR OF THE TELE-SCOPE.

BUT ACTUALLY, THE BASIC TECHNOLOGY WAS DEVELOPED NEARLY 100 YEARS EARLIER, DURING THE REIGN OF THE KADOE.

I HAD FUN, TOO, LISTENING TO ALL THOSE NEAT FACTS YOU SHARED!

HFF...

HFF...

THIS MAKES GREAT PRACTICE. YOU SET A VERY APPROPRIATE PACE.

THANK YOU FOR LETTING ME RUN ALONGSIDE YOU.

WHOMP

THEO! AYA!

MORNIN', YOU TWO!

HEY, OHGGA!

OF COURSE!

MAY I JOIN YOU AGAIN TOMOR-ROW?

TMP

TMP

TMP

OHGGA! YOU NEED TO EAT YOUR VEGETA-BLES!

NO WAY. I HATE GREEN FOOD!

SPIN

SPIN

WHATCHA EAT FOR BREAK-FAST, THEO?

I TRY TO STICK TO FISH, WITH SALAD, BEANS, AND RICE... OH, AND TOMATO SOUP!

I ALWAYS GO FOR THE GRILL. MUTTON, CHICKEN, BEEF...

HUH?

...UM...

FROM NOW ON, I'LL ALSO BE CALLING YOU THEO.

GOOD. AND YOU WILL ADDRESS ME AS AYA.

BWUH?!

IS THAT ALL RIGHT?

SURE! SOUNDS GREAT!

IT'S NORMAL FOR HYRON TO USE FIRST NAMES, SO I'M USED TO IT!

I THINK IT'S GOOD TO RESPECT EACH OTHER'S CULTURES. WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TO FORCE OURSELVES TO-

YEAH, BUT... THAT'S NORMAL FOR CREYAK.

ALL ONE NAME

DIANASYS DI'OHGGA

WE DON'T EVEN *HAVE* LAST NAMES!

Like, Rakta people have to be *really* close before they...

WOW, UM... I DUNNO... CALLING A RAKTA WOMAN BY HER GIVEN NAME? THAT'S A PRETTY TALL ORDER.

WHAT ABOUT HER? YOU CALL OHGGA BY HER FIRST NAME, DON'T YOU?

ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! I GET IT!

E FACT THAT THE RAKTA PEOPLE HAVE SERVED AS
E DRIVING FORCE BEHIND CENTURIES OF CONTINENTA
CIVILIZATION CAN BE DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTED TO OUR
ARACTERISTIC WILLINGNESS TO QUESTION AND REFOR
ESTABLISHED PRACTICE, IN STARK CONTRAST TO THE
MANNER IN WHICH OTHER CULTURES HAVE ALLOWED
THEMSELVES TO BE SWAYED BY RELIGIOUS IDEAS OR TH
CONFINES OF COMMON SENSE AS THEY PERCEIVED IT,
LOSING OUT ON ALL MANNER OF POTENTIAL SCIENTIFI
ADVANCEMENT, PERHAPS THE MOST GLARING EXAMPL
OF WHICH IS THE ASIN RELIGION'S ADAMANT BELIEF IN
HE GEOCENTRIC MODEL OF ASTRONOMIC THOUGHT AN
NSEQUENT REFUSAL TO ENTERTAIN THE CONCEPT THA
PLANET COULD REVOLVE AROUND THE SUN INSTEA
HICH CAUSED THE HYRON TO LAG OVER 200 YEAR
D THE PROGRESS OF MANACCHA-ADHERING RA
NDEED, THE PROACTIVE INTRODUCTION OF IDE
OTHER CULTURES IN RAKTA SOCIETY
NUMEROUS INVENTIONS THROUG

HOORAY!

THAT'S GREAT! I WANNA BE FRIENDS WITH YOU, TOO, AYA!

YES, MA'AM.

ALSO, WE SHALL DISPENSE WITH FORMALITIES...

...AND SPEAK AS EQUALS, IN THE CREYAK FASHION.

ARE YOU SURE? I'M RAKTA, YOU KNOW.

IT'S JUST THAT I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY MET A CREYAK BEFORE.

RIGHT. SORRY. IT WAS A SILLY QUESTION.

...!

OF COURSE I'M SURE!

SKRT

SKRT

SKRT

YAY!!

CHATTER

CHATTER

CHATTER

SKRT

SKRT

SKRT

I STILL COULDN'T FINISH IN TIME...

SHF

HEY. TERRIBLE TRIO.

IF YOU'RE NOT UP FOR THIS, MAYBE YOU COULD DO US ALL A FAVOR AND QUIT?

I, FOR ONE, WOULD BE HAPPY...

...TO MOVE ON TO MORE *ADVANCED* STUDY, FREE OF ANY DEAD WEIGHT.

IT IS NOT THE TRAINEES' CONCERN.

THE SUPERVISORS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR DETERMINING AN APPROPRIATE CURRICULUM.

THE CONTENT WE COVER IS SUPPOSED TO STEADILY RAMP UP OVER TIME. BUT THANKS TO YOU THREE, WE'RE BEHIND SCHEDULE.

ISN'T THAT RIGHT, PROFESSOR SEROS?

WHAT WORRIES ME...

...

...TO SUIT THE NEEDS OF THE *BOTTOM* OF THE CLASS, I FIND IT HARD TO BE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT WHERE WE'LL BE AT YEAR'S END.

IF WE CONTINUE TO ADJUST...

...IS EROSION OF THE PERSONNEL OFFICE'S STANDARDS.

PLEASE EXCUSE HER. SHE MEANS WELL. REALLY!

SHE'S JUST CONCERNED WITH *WHAT* SHE SAYS MORE THAN *HOW* SHE SAYS IT!

CAUICHA! THAT'S ENOUGH!

YOU'RE BEING VERY DISRESPECTFUL!

*THE ENTIRE **CLASS** IS BARELY HANGING ON.*

WHOA, WHOA... IT'S NOT JUST THOSE THREE, YOU KNOW?

SOME YEARS BACK, THE HOZANYKS WERE SO MIRED IN POOR INVESTMENTS, IT ALMOST RUINED THE FAMILY. THEIR ROARING COME-BACK BEGAN RIGHT AROUND THE TIME THIS GIRL CAME OF AGE. I FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT'S JUST COINCIDENCE...

CAUICHA HOZANYK...

THIRD DAUGHTER OF THE HEAD OF THE HOZANYK CONGLOM-ERATE. A DIE-HARD RATIONAL WHO EXCELS AT ARITH-METIC.

WHY MINCE WORDS...

...AND WASTE EVERYONE'S PRECIOUS TIME?

...ABOUT YOUR CLASS-MATES...

...OR THIS YEAR'S TEAM OF SUPERVI-SORS.

I UNDER-STAND YOUR REASON-ING.

HOWEVER, I'D ARGUE IT'S STILL MUCH TOO EARLY TO MAKE ANY DRASTIC JUDGMENTS...

MISS CAUICHA.

She got over that quick...

UNDER-STOOD. I SHALL BE ON MY WAY.

DOES HOUSE HOZANYK NOT OWE MUCH OF ITS SUCCESS TO THE ABILITY TO SENSE TALENT...

...AMONG THE TINIEST, UNKNOWN VENTURES?

YOU FOSTER THEM THAT THEY MIGHT FLOURISH—AND IN DOING SO, BRING FURTHER REPUTE TO THE HOZANYK NAME.

HMPH. TYPICAL NOVEAU RICHE.

ALWAYS CHASING THE SPOT-LIGHT.

TROT
トタ
TROT
トタ

IGNORED

OOPS. SORRY ABOUT THAT.

SHE'S REALLY ADAMANT ABOUT NOT ENGAGING WITH ANYTHING THAT WASTES TIME.

YOU MIGHT'VE BOUGHT YOURSELF SOME RECOGNITION. BUT YOU'LL NEVER BUY *CLASS*.

AW! I WANNA HAVE A RICH GIRL FIGHT!

Ow! My ears!

CLATTER

EXCUSE ME?!

YOU WANT THEM ALONE?

OR ALL TO-GETHER?

PUPUTO.

ESCORT THE STRAGGLERS TO AN EMPTY CLASSROOM.

BREAK IT UP, YOU TWO!

SUCCESS AS A KAFNA NEEDN'T HINGE UPON HOW QUICKLY YOU PROCESS PAPERWORK AT A DESK.

HOWEVER, A CERTAIN BASELINE IS EXPECTED, AND YOUR INABILITY TO HANDLE THE TEST PROBLEMS WITHOUT DIFFICULTY IS THUS TROUBLING.

...WILL SIMPLY NOT BE TOLERATED.

BUT THE BEHAVIOR I WITNESSED TODAY...

DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME, MEDINA?

...OF FAMILY BACKGROUND.

SUCCESS HERE ISN'T A MATTER OF SPEED, BUT IT IS EVEN *LESS* A MATTER...

AND ISN'T IT IN...

...THE *COMMONER'S* INTEREST...

...TO HAVE SERVICES SUCH AS RESTORATIONS, GUIDANCE, AND DOCUMENTATION EXECUTED WITH A *NOBLE* TOUCH?

I'D SAY IT'S VERY CLEAR THAT THE LIBRARY FAVORS THE ELITE.

MOST OF THE TWELVE ARE OF NOBLE PEDIGREE. IN FACT...

...GENERAL AFFAIRS IS HEADED BY THE ROYAL PRINCESS OF HOUSE CUPUL, IS IT NOT?

I BEG TO DIFFER.

IN ADDITION TO TALENT, I POSSESS SOMETHING THAT NO COMMON HANDS CAN REACH, NO MATTER HOW HARD THEY STRUGGLE.

MY LINEAGE IS JUST ONE MORE THING THAT SETS ME APART.

...THIS WHOLE DISCIPLINARY CHARADE SMACKS OF DESPERATE INFERIORITY.

IN FACT...

I'M QUITE SURE I WOULD'VE REMEMBERED THE NAME HOUSE SEROS, IF IT WERE A CLAN OF ANY *NOTE*.

HAAAH...

FOR THEY KNOW THAT IN THESE WALLS...

...EMINENCE DEMANDS COMMENSURATE REFINEMENT AND ABILITY.

BLOOD IS RESPECTED BY MANY AT THE LIBRARY, YES.

BUT YOU CAN BE CERTAIN THOSE URGED TO POWER WORK DILIGENTLY AND WITH TREPIDATION.

Z... SHF

NOR ARE THIN BOOKS BOUND WITH A LARGE SQUARE MARGIN. IT'S GARISH AND LACKS BALANCE.

SQUARE

CRAFTSMEN ARE LOATH TO WRAP BOOKS WITHOUT HEFT IN FINE LEATHER. THEY SEE IT AS TASTELESS.

THE SAME CAN BE SAID OF BINDINGS.

SO THIN, YOU CAN'T EVEN STAND ON YOUR OWN WHEN SHELVED EDGEWISE.

A SINGLE GLANCE IS ENOUGH FOR ANYONE TO SEE THEY HAVE NOTHING TO LEARN FROM YOU.

THIS APPLIES TO HOW KAFNA PRESENT THEMSELVES, AS WELL.

TRAINEES SUCH AS YOURSELVES, STILL LACKING IN KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE, ARE BUT CRUDE, FLIMSY BOOKLETS.

YOU CAN BIND YOURSELF IN THE FINEST LEATHER...

...OR GIVE YOURSELF A BEAUTIFULLY ENGRAVED COVER, INLAID WITH SPARKLING JEWELS...

...BUT YOUR CONTENT DOES NOT CHANGE. YOU'RE THE SAME FLIMSY BOOKLET, NOW WEARING A SQUARE FAR TOO LARGE TO SUIT.

...TOUTING ITS OWN GREATNESS, DOES IT NOT STRIKE YOU AS TERRIBLY UNBECOMING?

You'd think a person would know better...

HAAAH...

SO TELL ME, WHEN YOU SEE A BOOK WITHOUT ROOM FOR ITS OWN TITLE ON THE SPINE, WOBBLING PROUDLY...

YOU *DARE* MOCK THE HAHAL'K NAME?!

IMPUDENT WRETCH!

OH, THIS ISN'T ABOUT HOUSE HAHAL'K.

I'M TALKING ABOUT *YOU*, MEDINA.

SHVR
SHVR
WOOSH
SHVR
SHVR
DRAIN
CLUTCH
TO BE BORN DRAPED IN ALL THE WORLD'S FINERY... YES, I DO ENVY THAT.
BUT I WOULD HOPE MYSELF SENSIBLE ENOUGH TO ACT APPRO-PRIATE TO MY STATION.
TRMBL
TRMBL
TRMBL
TRMBL

AND MISS OHGGA?

TELL ME, HOW DO YOU PERCEIVE YOURSELF AT THIS POINT IN TIME?

SHF

WELL, LOOK AT THAT...

...

THIS ISN'T A MILITARY EXERCISE, DEAR.

I'M NOTHING! RAZOR THIN! THE FLATTEST BOOK YOU'VE EVER SEEN!

MA'AM, YES, MA'AM!

GULP

AND WHAT OF YOU, MISTER FUMIS?

FIRST, I'D JUST LIKE TO SAY...

HOW THICK OF A BOOK DO YOU IMAGINE YOURSELF TO BE?

...SO CAN THE THICKEST TOMES BE HOLLOW, FULL OF WORDS YET DEVOID OF SUBSTANCE.

JUST AS A PAMPHLET CAN SPEAK THE TRUTH PLAINLY AND SIMPLY, FREE OF EXCESS...

I DON'T THINK IT'S FAIR TO SUGGEST THAT A BOOK RISES IN VALUE SIMPLY BECAUSE IT IS THICK.

AND IN TERMS OF STORAGE AND TRANSPORT, THE THIN, LIGHTWEIGHT TEXT KNOWS NO RIVAL.

OTHER BOOKS GROW THICK INADVER-TENTLY, PACKED WITH UNNEEDED DETAIL.

...WHILE SOMEHOW MANAGING TO REMAIN VERY THIN.

...THAT IT DOES SO...

...AND...

...ALL MANNER OF INFORMATION, READABLE IN ANY LANGUAGE...

IF...IF THERE IS SUCH A THING AS AN IDEAL BOOK IN THIS WORLD, I'D IMAGINE IT MUST CONTAIN...

RIGHT NOW, I'M A FRAGILE, UNFOCUSED, THIN, AND NEARLY WORTHLESS BOOK.

BUT I INTEND TO KEEP REVISING MYSELF INTO SOMETHING MORE.

BUT, UM...

...I GUESS THAT'S REALLY BESIDE THE POINT.

I AM ASKING YOU TO HURRY.

KEEP THAT IN MIND.

IT'S STILL EARLY. NO NEED TO PANIC.

BUT...

FWIP

IT...

IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT! WE'VE GOT THIS!

GUHHH...

I'M JUST TAKING MY TIME GETTING STARTED.

IF YOU'RE SUGGESTING I'M IN ANY WAY ASSOCIATED WITH YOUR LITTLE CLIQUE OF REJECTS, YOU ARE SORELY MISTAKEN.

Wow...

SLAM

SO... A PAGE WENT MISSING?

THERE IS NO ENTRY FOR "SECOND PLACE" IN THE HAHAL'K FAMILY DICTIONARY.

IT WON'T BE LONG UNTIL I'M STANDING AT THE TOP OF THIS CLASS.

THAT DODDERING OLD *FOOL* OF A TEACHER.

GROUPING ME IN...

...WITH A COUPLE OF HALF-BREEDS!

STORM

STORM

STORM

ONE BARELY FREE OF HER SHACK-LES...

...THE OTHER ON THE VERGE OF EXTINC-TION!

IT OUGHT TO BE A *CRIME*...

...TO SULLY NOBLE HYRON BLOOD WITH SUCH *FILTH!*


Y...
YEAH, SHE IS A LITTLE SCARY.
THAT PROFESSOR JUST KINDA GETS TO ME...
BUT I'M SURE SHE'S ONLY STRICT WITH US BECAUSE SHE WANTS US TO BE GREAT KAFNA!
...OHGGA? YOU ALL RIGHT?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
OH, BELIEVE ME, I KNOW.
SHE CAN'T STOP *LOOKING* AT US.

AND THEN THERE'S THE WAY SHE THROWS IN A STERN COMMENT TO RILE US UP.

SHE'S TRYING TO GAUGE HOW EACH OF US REACTS UNDER PRESSURE.

DURING CLASS. WHENEVER SHE'S STANDING BEFORE US, SHE'S ALWAYS FLICKING HER EYES AROUND, SCANNING THE TRAINEES ONE AFTER ANOTHER.

THE THING THAT GETS ME IS HOW *MUCH* HER EYES MANAGE TO SAY.

THE WAY SHE STARES, IT LEAVES ME *DIZZY*...

SHE WANTS TO KNOW JUST HOW FAR WE CAN BE PUSHED.

IT WAS THE SAME JUST NOW. LITTLE POKES AND PRODS TO CHECK THE THREE OF US OVER.

HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO DO THAT?

IS IT SOMETHING ALL CREYAK LEARN?

YUP.

IF THEY'RE REALLY GLARING, I CAN EVEN FEEL IT WITH MY BACK TURNED!

YOU TOLD ME BEFORE THAT YOU CAN SENSE WHERE PEOPLE ARE LOOKING, RIGHT?

BA-
DUMP

...

Now, time for some chow!

DA-DUM

NOPE! IT'S MY OWN SPECIAL POWER!



HEY!

I WAS JUST LOOKING FOR YOU!

THERE'S GOTTA BE SOME WAY FOR ME TO BREAK THROUGH...

I CAN'T DECIDE HOW TO SPEND MY FREE TIME IN THE EVENINGS...

I COULD READ. TRY TO SCROUNGE EVERY EXTRA BIT OF KNOWLEDGE I CAN.

BUT LATELY, IT FEELS LIKE THE PROBLEMS ON OUR TESTS ARE MORE ABOUT HOW QUICKLY WE CAN SOLVE PROBLEMS...

TROT タ

TROT タ

!

FWOING

HUH?! YOU WERE TALKING TO *ME*?!

I figured someone else must be walking behind me!

HOW COULD YOU IGNORE ME LIKE THAT ?!!

YOU WERE THE ONE WHO SAID YOU DIDN'T WANT TO BE SEEN ASSOCIATING WITH SOME KID FROM THE STICKS.

And that it was bad enough we had to work together...

ALL RIGHT, YES. THAT WAS MY PLAN *INITIALLY.*

YOU SAID IT WAS ALL PART OF YOUR PLAN TO REINVENT YOURSELF AS PART OF THE COOL, URBAN "IN CROWD"!

BACK HOME, THE GIRLS WERE ALWAYS DIVIDING THEMSELVES UP INTO TWO OR THREE DIFFERENT GROUPS.

Ohhh... Yeah, you're right.

They're really... individu-alistic.

BUT IT TURNS OUT THE GIRLS WHO COME TO WORK AT THE LIBRARY AREN'T THE CLIQUEY TYPE.

UM... SURE?

ANYWAY, BACK TO THE TOPIC AT HAND!

ARE YOU FREE RIGHT NOW?

YEP, I HEAR THAT.

ALSO, I REALIZED THAT GETTING NOTICED AMONG THESE GENIUSES WAS NIGH IMPOSSIBLE.

...I MIGHT AS WELL TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO START MY OWN!

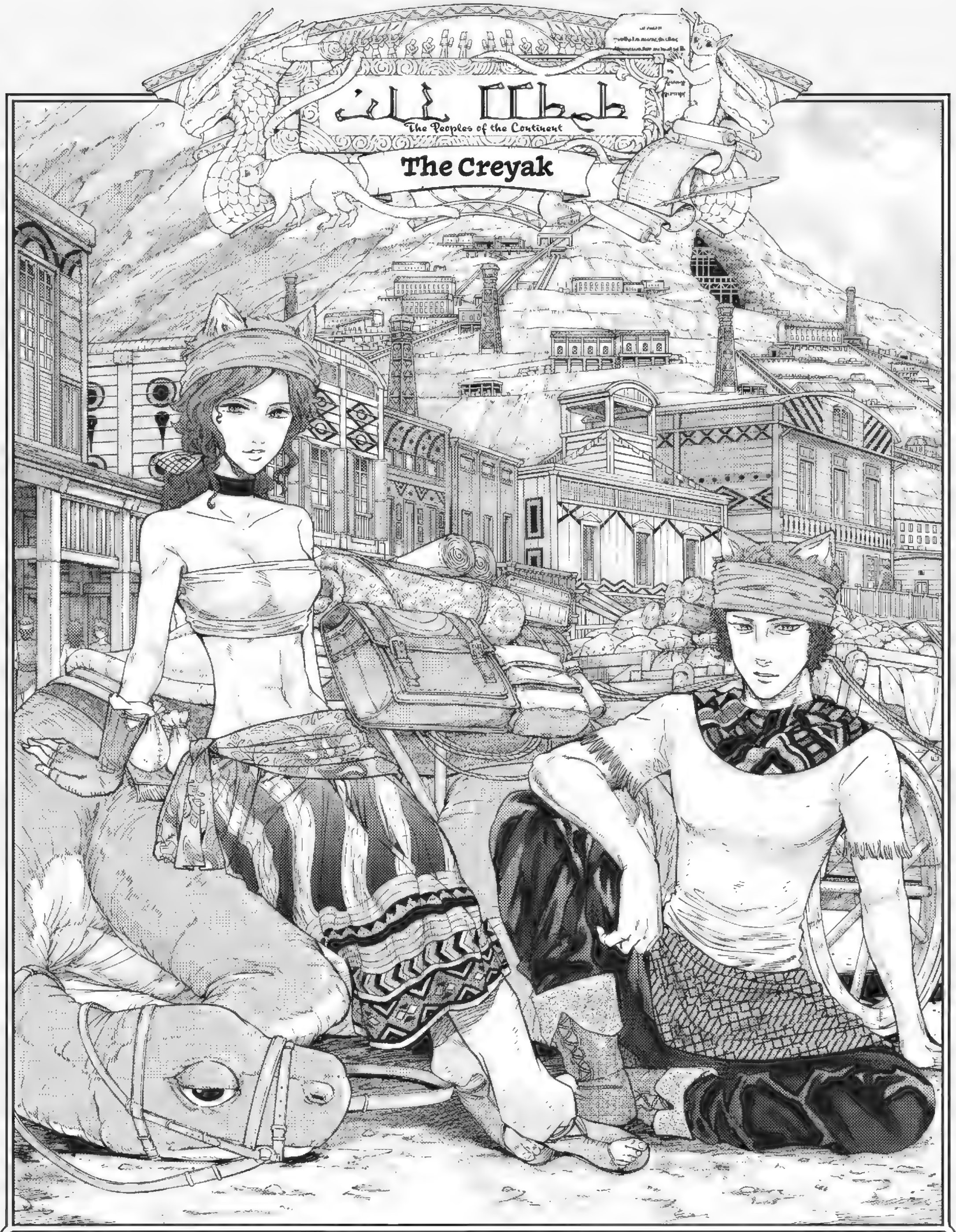
I FIGURE, IF NOBODY *ELSE* IS GONNA FORM A GROUP...

AND LUCKY FOR YOU, I DECIDED TO MAKE YOU A MEMBER!



The Peoples of the Continent

The Creyak



[Classification] Kayyug Family | Prairie-native peoples whose ears are found atop the head. Other subclassifications include the Gralice, Racc, and Croh.

[Faith] Manaccha | **[Color] Orange** | **[Temperament] Gruff and Considerate**

Creyak is a general name applied by the Rakta to Kayyug peoples who were captured and enslaved. The name "Creyak" means "the neighboring brutes." On regaining freedom, this group selected the color orange—at the time also used by their former Rakta captors—to represent themselves.

Not even death offers respite from the sweat and sand that chokes the region; the coffins, too, are caked with dust.

(Log entry at Gelga Mine, Creyak Autonomous Region)

The Peoples of the Continent

The Kokopah



[Classification] Kokopah Family | Winged peoples native to the continent's valleys. Other subclassifications include the Pahbin, Wippow, and Nappo.

[Faith] Manaccha | **[Color] Yellow** | **[Temperament] Lively and Unabashed**

The Kokopah are a race of sprites present on the continent since ancient times. The name "Kokopah" means "O Great Land we call our home, we are your ally and a friend to the spirits; we are the servants that prosper, binding sky and earth." Their representative color, yellow, is said to be the color most favored by spirits.

They never shut up.
It's like a constant assault on the ears.

(Log entry at the Kokopah town of Viluppit-Vahalei)

I! AM!

TALK-ING!

AHEM! I HEREBY ESTABLISH ...

...THE POP LIT APPRECIATION CLUB!

ALL RIGHT, THEN.

TO BEGIN, I'D JUST LIKE TO POINT OUT...

...THAT THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT *TYPES* OF BOOKS IN THIS WORLD...

KISS KISS

AW! SO YOUR NAME'S UIRA, HUH?

...BUT THIS GROUP'S FOCUS...

THERE SURE ARE A LOT OF CATS AT THE LIBRARY.

I HEAR THEY'RE ALL PETS OF ONE OF THE SAGES.

...WILL BE ON *NOVELS*. NAMELY, POPULAR LIT-ERATURE. THINGS WRITTEN FOR ENTERTAINMENT PURPOSES. I'VE INVITED YOU ALL HERE AS I KNOW YOU'RE FANS OF...

HEY, UH... DO I REALLY NEED TO BE HERE?

23

Night on the Pop Lit Railroad

WE'RE GONNA MEET UP AND TALK ABOUT BOOKS WE LIKE!!

I THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER ASK!

MWA-HA-HA!

CLAP パチ CLAP パチ CLAP パチ CLAP パチ

SO, UH, MISS CURLS-A-LOT, COULD YOU FILL US IN ON WHAT EXACTLY WE'LL BE DOING?

IS THIS EVERYONE YOU COULD FIND?

!

THAT SOUNDS FUN! BUT, UM...WE'VE ONLY GOT FIVE TRAINEES HERE, PLUS MISTER PAOPAO.

HOORAY!

HEH!

SO... WHAT SHE'S SAYING IS, SHE JUST REALLY WANTED TO FORM A GROUP, AND NOW SHE'S PLAYING THE REST BY EAR.

I HARDLY NEED SLEEP, SO I'VE GOT LOTS OF TIME ON MY HANDS.

I'LL READ *ANY-THING.*

MOST OF OUR CLASS WON'T EVEN READ THE CLASSICS...

...MUCH LESS SERIALIZED NOVELS. IF IT'S NOT ON THE KAFNA EXAM, FORGET IT.

MISS GUUNJOH SAYS SHE'S A REGULAR BOOK *PARASITE.*

AS IF "BOOKWORM" WASN'T DEMEANING ENOUGH...

WHAT ABOUT YOU? WHY DO YOU MAKE TIME FOR POPULAR FICTION?

AT 5 OUT OF 27, I'D SAY WE DID PRETTY GOOD.

HMM... I GUESS WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT...

...NONE OF THE TRAINEES I'VE GOTTEN TO KNOW SEEM TO READ THE LATEST RELEASES.

LIKES PICTURE DICTION-ARIES.

BARELY KEPT UP WITH EXAM PREP, MUCH LESS OUTSIDE READING.

LIKES HIS-TORICAL NONFIC-TION.

WON'T EVEN TALK ABOUT IT.

Why do I gotta tell you what kinda books I like?!

I get how he feels!

HEY, KID...

WHAT WAS IT? THEO FUMIS?

HUH? OH!

HOW'D YOU KNOW MY NAME, ANYWAY?

IT WAS PEPERICO-THE KOKOPAH TRAINEE. SHE TOLD ME!

AH... THAT ONE'S ALWAYS AFTER A SCOOP.

WOW. YOU WENT OUT OF YOUR WAY TO LEARN SOMEONE'S NAME?

WH ...?!

NAMES ARE IMPORTANT!

I WASN'T GONNA SAY ANYTHING, BUT YOU COULD REALLY DO BETTER!

OUR LEADER, FOR EXAMPLE. IT'S NOT "MISS CURLS-A-LOT." IT'S MIHONA!

HE'S GOT A POINT... FOR ALL THE MEMORIZING YOU GOTTA DO TO PASS THE KAFNA EXAM, PEOPLE HERE SURE ARE SLOPPY ABOUT NAMES.

WHEN I WAS TRYING TO ROUND UP GROUP MEMBERS, HALF THE PEOPLE I APPROACHED...

...TOLD ME THEY HAD NO IDEA WHO I WAS!

IN YOUR CASE, I DOUBT THAT'S A *NAME* ISSUE.

GIGGLE ...

DO YOU KNOW THEIR NAMES, TOO?

OF COURSE!

I COULDN'T AGREE MORE.

NAMES ARE VERY SPECIAL THINGS.

WELL SAID, MISTER FUMIS.

HEHE...

YOU GOT IT!

SHE'S MISS TUTULL XIU!

RIGHT?

AND...

THAT'S MISS SOPHIE SCHWIMM.

HEHE! A MINUTE AGO, WE WERE "PINT-SIZE" AND "LADY SPECTACLES"!

I KNEW THEM ALL BY HEART AFTER OUR FIRST ROLL CALL.

EVEN IF WE'RE HEADED TO DIFFERENT OFFICES, WE'VE STILL GOT A WHOLE YEAR TOGETHER.

HMPH. I SUPPOSE IT *HAS* BEEN A FULL WEEK.

WOW! YOU HAVE A SON, MISS SOPHIE?

TUTULL AND I SHARE A DORM ROOM. SHE'S SO SWEET! SHE'D MAKE A LOVELY DAUGHTER-IN-LAW...

HEHE...

SHE PASSED THE EXAM AT AGE 11, ENTIRELY SELF-TAUGHT. NO PREP SCHOOL!

LIKE, TUTULL HERE IS A REAL, CERTIFIABLE *GENIUS!*

I'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT OUR WHOLE CLASS IS AMAZING, THOUGH.

REALLY, I'M NOT THAT SMART!

WOW!

WHAT MAKES *YOU* THE EXPERT?

SHE DOES SEEM A LOT LESS JADED THAN YOUR AVERAGE TRAINEE...

YOU MIGHT BE FOOLING THEM, BUT NOT ME!

ALL RIGHT. ENOUGH WITH THAT LAUGH.

NOW, NOW...

SHE WON'T EVEN BRAID HER OWN HAIR!

...SHE LEAVES HER CLOTHES IN A HEAP ON THE FLOOR...

SHE'S ALWAYS SLEEPING IN...

...

SHE'S ONLY ACTING THIS WAY 'CAUSE SHE WANTS YOU TO THINK SHE'S SOPHISTI-CATED.

BUT THE TRUTH IS, WHEN WE'RE ALONE, SHE'S LIKE A LITTLE KID!

...FINE. AS THE ONLY ONE HERE WHO KNOWS THIS PLACE, LEMME OFFER SOME ADVICE.

ABOUT WHAT?!

EEK! STOP! THAT TICKLES!

WHEN DO WE GET TO THE PART WHERE WE TALK ABOUT BOOKS?

DON'T YOU GO GIVING AWAY MY SECRETS!

I FIGURED TODAY'D MOSTLY BE A MEET-AND-GREET...

?!

HUH? WHY IS THAT A HURDLE?!

OUR FIRST HURDLE IS GONNA BE GETTING OUR HANDS ON NEW RELEASES.

AND PREDICTABLY, AS GENERAL PATRONS START PLACIN' HOLDS, A HUGE WAITING LIST FORMS. KAFNA ADDING TO THE WAIT IS A BIG NO-NO.

BUT, AS I'M SURE YOU KNOW, IT LIMITS THE NUMBER OF COPIES IT ORDERS SO AS NOT TO CUT INTO PUBLISHER PROFITS.

IT'S TRUE THAT THE *LIBRARY* GETS ALL THE LATEST BOOKS. NEW STUFF IS ADDED TO THE COLLECTION EVERY DAY.

OUR LEADER HERE'S GOT A REAL FORGETTABLE FACE. SHE COULD MAKE SOME NICE POCKET MONEY WORKING THIS GAME.

FORGETTABLE

DA-DUN

AN EAGER KAFNA'S EITHER GOTTA HEAD OVER TO THE SHOP IN DISGUISE...

...OR SEND A TRAINEE, BEFORE CITIZENS HAVE TIME TO LEARN THE NEW KIDS' FACES.

SO HERE WE ARE, WORKIN' OUR TAILS OFF AT THE LITERAL NEXUS OF BOOKS, WITHOUT ANY EASY ACCESS TO THE LATEST READS.

SO OUR ONLY OPTION IS TO BUY OUR OWN COPIES.

EXCEPT, A SHOP'S GONNA HAVE LIMITED STOCK AND LONG LINES, AND IT AIN'T TOO SEEMLY FOR A *KAFNA* TO SHOW UP CLAIMIN' A COPY.

MY POINT IS, WE'LL NEVER GET ENOUGH COPIES FOR *ALL* OF US.

SO I SUGGEST WE EACH WORK ON GETTIN' *ONE* COPY OF THE BOOKS WE WANNA READ...

...AND PASS IT DOWN THE LINE AS WE FINISH.

YEAH, PROBABLY. BUT THERE'S NO GUARANTEE YOU'LL GET ASSIGNED THE ONES YOU HAVE YOUR EYE ON. AND I HEAR READIN' FOR WORK SUCKS ALL THE FUN OUT OF IT.

EXCUSE ME! QUESTION!

I HEARD THAT IF YOU JOIN THE JUDICIAL OFFICE, YOU CAN READ BOOKS BEFORE THEY'RE RELEASED!

フッ FLUFF FLUFF フッ

SAGE ADVICE FROM A SEASONED KOHKWA!

HEY! QUIT FLUFFIN' UP MY HAIR!

WOOOOW!

THAT WAY, WE'LL ALL GET SOMETHIN' OUT OF THIS LITTLE CLUB.

I'LL BE IN CHARGE OF *SHAGRAZZAT!*

HAVE YOU READ *MULLIGAD?*

MY MOM SAYS I'M NOT ALLOW-ED...

I HEAR A LOT OF AUTHORS MAKE THEIR HOME IN AFTZAAK.

MAYBE WE'LL RUN INTO THEM IN TOWN!

HOW WOULD YOU RECOG-NIZE THEM EVEN IF YOU DID?

NO FAIR! THAT MEANS YOU GET TO READ THE NEW VOLUMES FIRST!

KEEP IT UP! YOU'VE GOT THIS!

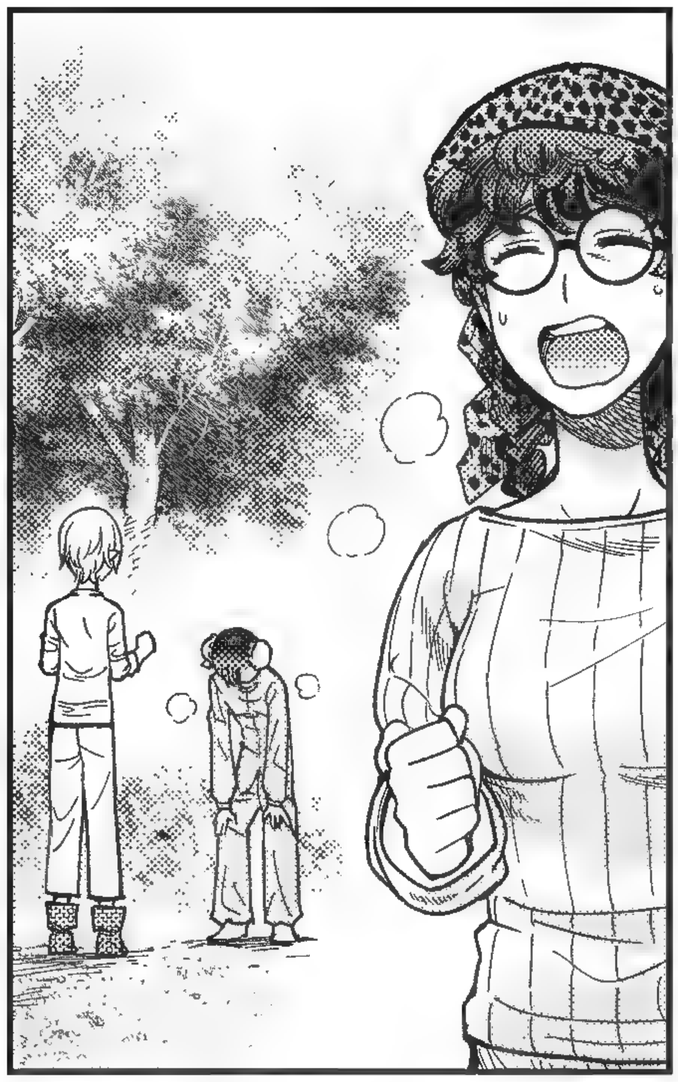
SIMPLE COGNITIVE BIAS. THERE ISN'T ANY HARD DATA TO BACK UP THAT CLAIM.

THE BOOK SIMPLY BRINGS STRIFE BETWEEN RACES TO THE FOREFRONT OF OUR MINDS, MAKING US MORE SENSITIVE TO SUCH NEWS.

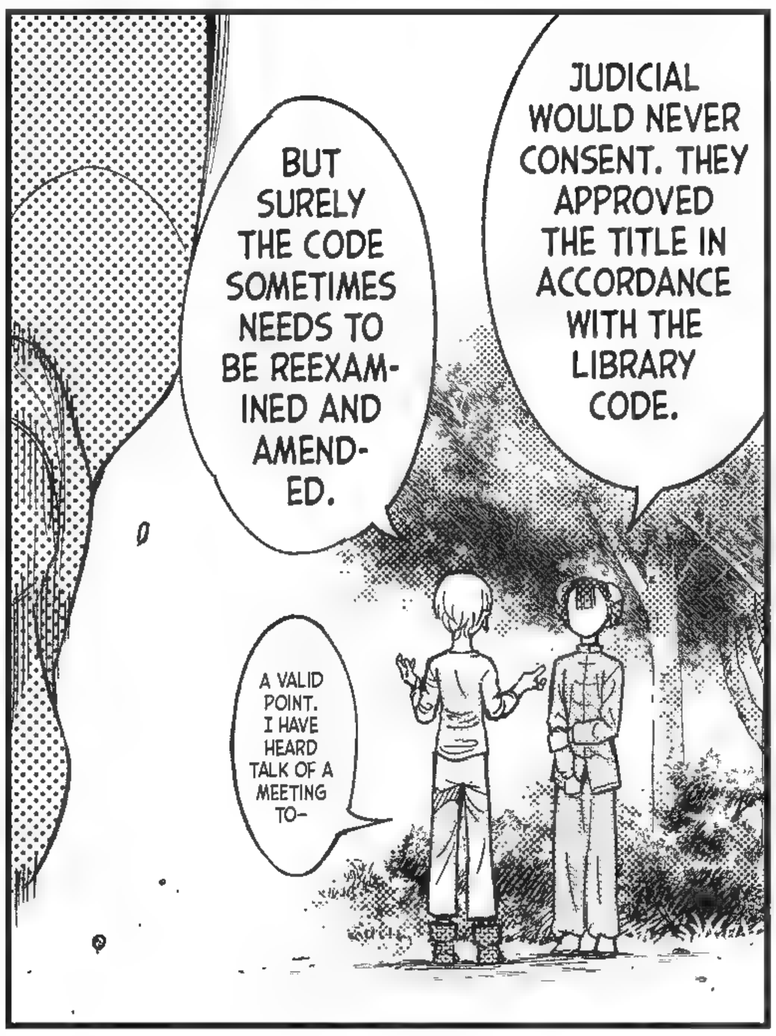
WELL, AT LEAST A LENDING RESTRICTION, THEN!

BUT THEY SAY THE CONTENT IS INCITING A LOT OF REAL-WORLD STRIFE!

I TRULY DOUBT THE LIBRARY WILL INSTITUTE A PUBLICATION BAN FOR *MULLIGAD*.











THE ACT OF PHYSICAL CONTACT ELICITS A CURIOUS SENSE OF FULFILLMENT.

HM... I SEE.

HAHA! CREYAK SURE HAVE A DIFFERENT SENSE OF PERSONAL SPACE, HUH?

SQUEEZE

NOD

YOU DOWN WITH THIS?

WHUH?!

...ALL RIGHT. NEXT.

EEEEP!

Three arm-lengths away at all times!

AND I'M REAL CAREFUL ONLY TO POUNCE ON PEOPLE WHO DON'T MIND!

I JUST FIGURE GETTING EMBARRASSED ABOUT IT WOULD BE KIND OF INSULTING TO HER CULTURE...

IT'S NOT LIKE IT'S *EASY* FOR ME TO DO THAT WITH OHGGA.

BUT, UM ...!

CONTACT LIKE THAT MEANS SOMETHING *VERY* DIFFERENT FOR HYRON AND RAKTA...

WHAT'RE YOU DOING?!

THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR RESEARCH. WE SHOULDN'T WASTE IT.

AND GIVEN THE FREEDOM WE'RE AFFORDED IN THIS MODERN AGE TO DETERMINE GREETING STYLES OF OUR OWN PREFERENCE...

...IT WOULD BE FOOLISH FOR US TO RULE THIS OPTION OUT *WITHOUT* FIRST TRYING IT.

...I WOULD ARGUE...

HOW-EVER...

ERP...

...WHEN A PERSON IS REMOVED FROM HIS OR HER PLACE OF UPBRINGING AND REQUIRED TO ENGAGE WITH NUMEROUS OTHER PEOPLES AND CUSTOMS, AS WE ARE NOW, THE NECESSITY OF ADHERING TO EXISTING BEHAVIORS DIMINISHES.

...A FAIR ARGUMENT.

...WOULD HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED IN LOGICAL FASHION, WITH REGARD TO FACTORS SUCH AS ENVIRONMENT, LIFESTYLE, AND PHYSICAL MAKEUP.

THE GREETINGS OF ANY GIVEN CULTURE...

FASCINATING.

YES. MM-HM.

SO... CREYAK USUALLY LIMIT CONTACT TO ABOUT TWO SECONDS MAX...

SHRF わさ...

SHRF わさ...

THIS IS MOST INFORMA-TIVE.

SHRF わさ...

PANT
PANT
LIVELY BUNCH, AREN'T THEY?
WOOHOO!
PHEW...
IT'S OVER...
HFF...
HFF...
PLEASE TELL ME WE DON'T HAVE TO RUN ON OUR DAY OFF.
I NEED TO SLEEP IN TOMOR-ROW!
I THINK I JUST HIT PEAK EXHAUS-TION...
YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU'RE LOOKING PALE.
HFF...
HFF...
HFF...
HFF...
HFF...
HFF...
...
AT LEAST THE OTHER TWO STRAGGLERS KNOW HOW TO RUN...

ARCHIVAL OFFICE PRACTICUM

OUR JOB IS TO SEE THEM TO THE SHELVES.

NEW BOOKS ARE ADDED TO THE LIBRARY'S COLLECTION DAILY.

WE CHECK THE DATA PROVIDED BY THE CATALOGING DIVISION AND AFFIX THE CORRECT LABEL TO THE SPINE.

FIRST WE HAVE TO ENSURE THE PAGES ARE BOUND IN ORDER AND THAT NONE ARE MISSING.

ONCE FINISHED, WE PASS THE BOOK TO THE NEXT GROUP, WHO WILL CHECK OUR WORK AND REPEAT.

RRK

RRK

WITHOUT THIS STEP, THE SPINE AND SIGNATURES OF A BRAND NEW BOOK CAN GET DAMAGED UPON BEING OPENED FROM THE FRONT.

THEN WE OPEN THE BOOK FROM THE CENTER TO GENTLY BREAK IN THE BINDING.

I THINK IT'S FAIR TO SAY WE WALK THE LIBRARY'S AISLES MORE THAN ANY OTHER OFFICE.

FOR EACH NEW BOOK SHELVED, WE MUST FIND A NEW SHELF FOR ANOTHER.

IF NO ISSUES ARE FOUND, THE BOOK IS READY TO BE STAMPED WITH THE LIBRARY'S EMBLEM AND DATE, THEN TAKEN TO THE SHELVES.

WE ARE THE ARCHIVAL OFFICE, BACKBONE OF THE LIBRARY!

A MARRIAGE OF DESKWORK AND LEG-WORK!

WE'RE BOTH STATIONARY AND IN MOTION!

PUFF...

PUFF...

HUFF...

I DUNNO IF I'LL *WAKE UP* TOMOR-ROW...

NO KIDDIN'... SEEMS LIKE WE'RE ALL BEAT...

FWP FWP FWP FWP FWP FWP FWP

Holy Magus...

...PUT A SOCK IN IT.

UM... MISS MEDINA? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

...

...

...

WOBBLE

HFF...

HFF...

SKRT
SKRT
SKRT
SKRT
SKRT
SKRT
SKRT
YAAAWN
SKRT
SKRT
SKRT
Check it once. Check it again. Just to be safe.
HFF...
HFF...

AND BEST OF ALL, WE'VE GOT TOMORROW OFF!

PLEASE DON'T HOP.

FINALLY! TIME TO EAT!

FWWSHHH

I HOPE THEY DIDN'T RUN INTO TROUBLE ON THE ROAD OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT...

I GUESS THE 27TH TRAINEE JUST NEVER SHOWED.

THE CHANCES OF IT BEING A FOURTH GUY...

...VERSUS *ANOTHER* RAVENOUS BEAST? I'D RATHER NOT PLAY THOSE ODDS.

HOW COULD YOU SAY THAT?!

WHAT ODDS? THEY ALREADY *TOLD* US THERE ARE ONLY THREE GUYS.

HEY, THAT'S RIGHT!

THE LAST TRAINEE STILL HASN'T JOINED US!

GOOD.

ALL THE BETTER FOR US.

WHY YOU GOTTA BE LIKE THAT, ALV? LEMME DREAM A LITTLE.

STAGGER

ヨロ…

WOBBLE

フラ…

WOBBLE

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!

I'M FINE...

KEEP WALKING!

SHALL I HELP YOU TO THE INFIR-MARY?

...G...

JUST FEELING A BIT FATI...

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.

GET YOUR HANDS OFF ME!!

I'M SORRY IF I...

I...

DO NOT *TOUCH* ME, YOU FILTH.

SHRF

HOW *DARE* YOU DEFILE PURE HYRON SKIN, YOU *HALF-BREED?*

MONGREL OF THE ONES WHO SHOULD BE *DEAD!*

BRMMM

SHAK

SHAK

SHAK

SHAK

SHAK

SHAK

SHAK

SHAK

WHSH

STORM

STORM

STORM

STORM

THUD

UM...

I...

I DON'T ...

D...

DID SHE JUST ...?

THERE'S NO WAY SHE JUST SAID THAT...

KRNCH...

BUT WHEN I HEAR WORDS THAT SHOULDN'T *EVER* LEAVE SOMEONE'S LIPS, IT BECOMES MINE.

WHAT GOES ON INSIDE YOUR HEAD IS YOUR OWN BUSINESS.

YOUR KNEES ARE SHAKING.

QUAKE QUAKE

!!

SHF

WHACK

OWW!

...HMPH.

WE'RE IN AFTZAAK NOW. CAN WE *PLEASE* NOT TALK RELIGION?!

YEAH, WELL IT'S NOT LIKE ATLATONAN'S REAL, EITHER.

WONDERFUL. NEXT, SHE'LL BE TELLING US VIRACOCHA REALLY EXISTS.

ASIN'S *CAPTURING THE PIED-MONT*? IN *THIS* DAY AND AGE?

THAT'S THE KIND OF STUFF I'D EXPECT OUT OF MY GREAT-GRAND-FATHER.

SHE MUST BE AKINI, THEN...

LISTEN, THEO...

THEY MIGHT REJECT SOMETHING, BUT IF LATER THEY DISCOVER THAT IT'S NOT SO BAD AFTER ALL, THEY'LL ACCEPT THEM WITH OPEN ARMS.

MOST OF THE TIME, THAT'S ALL IT BOILS DOWN TO.

USUALLY, THEY'RE JUST TRYIN' TO PROTECT THEMSELVES, LIKE THE PEOPLE HERE WERE.

WHEN YOU MOVE ON TO BIGGER THINGS THAN AMUN, YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO DEAL WITH PEOPLE REJECTING YOU AGAIN.

THEY'RE JUST TAKING THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE.

IT AIN'T ABOUT PROVING A POINT.

THEY'RE THINKIN', "I DUNNO TOO MUCH ABOUT THIS KID, AND EVERYONE ELSE IS KEEPIN' THEIR DISTANCE, SO I WILL, TOO."

BUT...

...YOU'RE GONNA RUN INTO SOMEONE WITH CONVICTIONS.

AND THAT AIN'T SO EASY TO WAVE AWAY.

...SOONER OR LATER...

CONVICTIONS...

...I'D NEVER FELT SOMEONE LOOK AT ME THE WAY SHE DID TODAY.

...BUT...

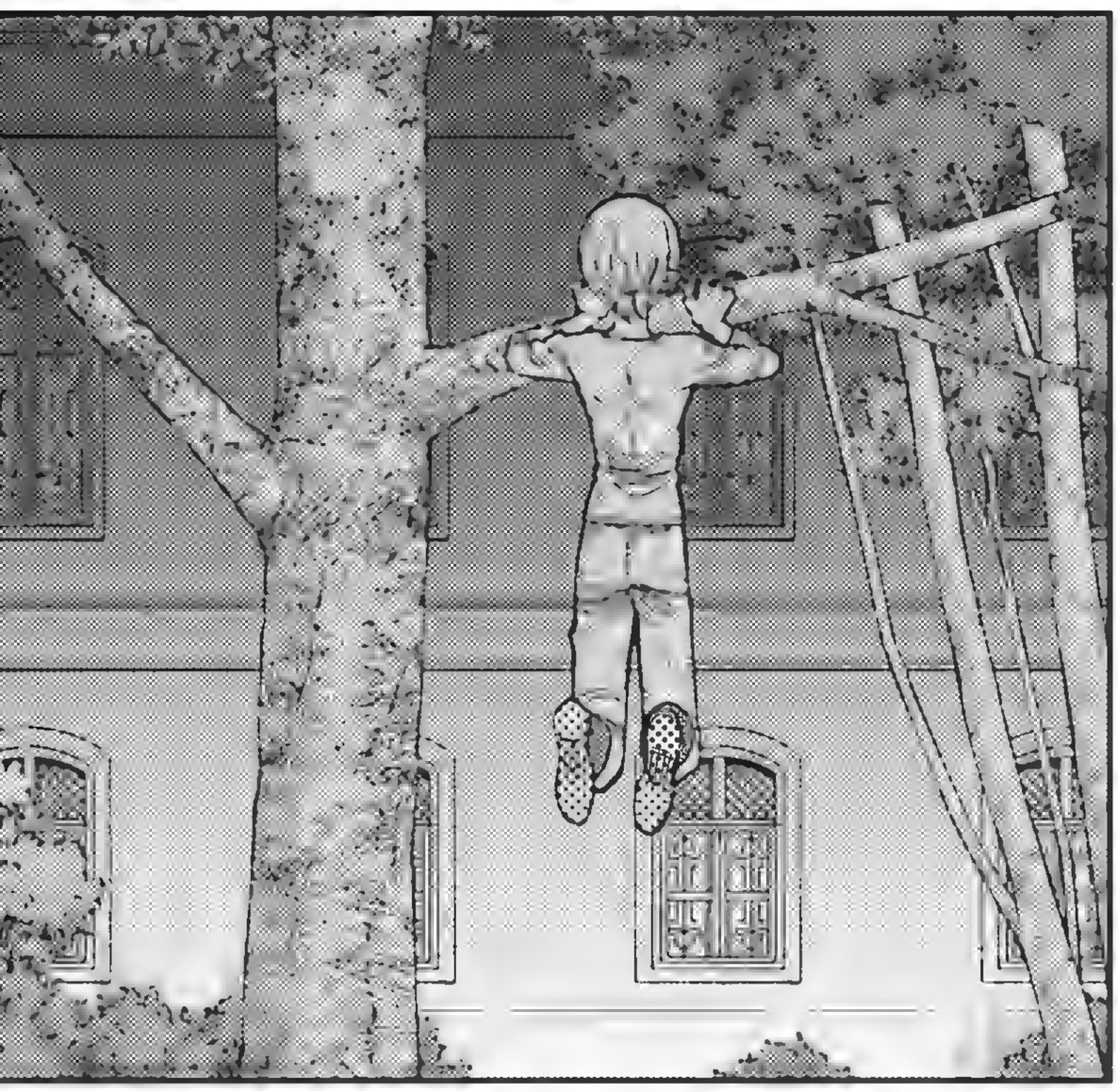
I'VE FELT REJECTION FROM A LOT OF PEOPLE, FOR A LOT OF DIFFERENT REASONS...

THOSE EYES HELD OPEN, OVERWHELMING HATRED.

...YOU'RE A TOUGH KID. I'M SURE YOU'LL FIGURE IT OUT.

BUT, HEY...

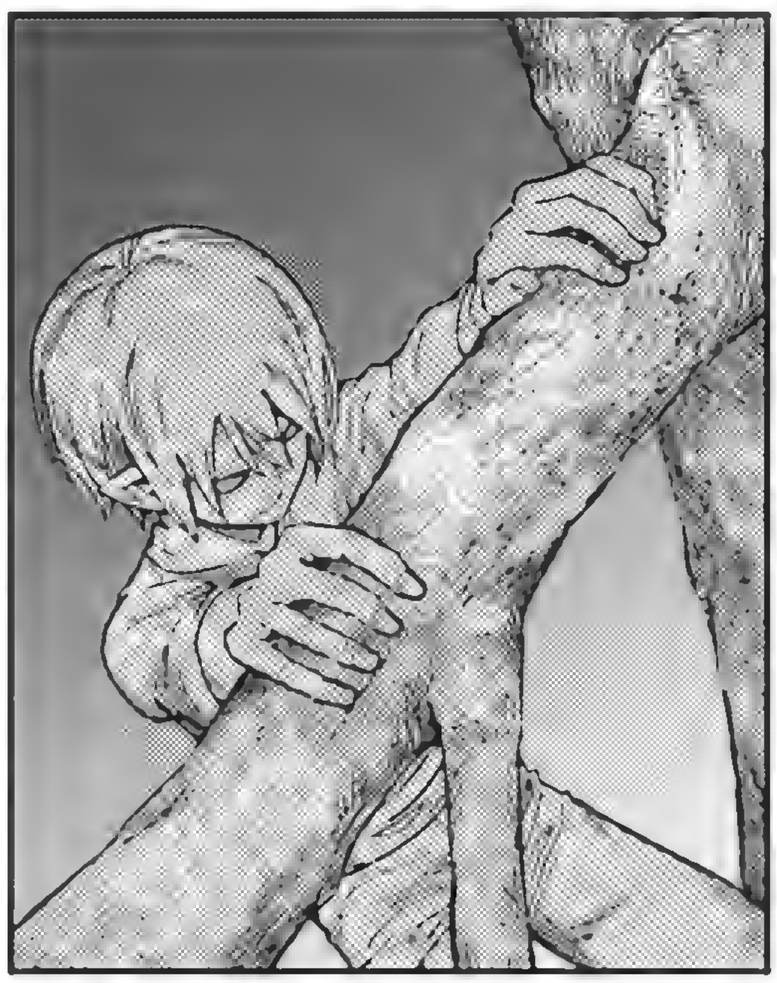







IF YA NEED A WAY TO CLEAR YER HEAD...
...TRAIN!


DON'T FORGET, THEO.



TIRED? JUST TRAIN!

SOMETHIN' GOT YA FEELIN' DOWN? TRAIN!

AND WHEN IT DOES, AND IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE...

'CAUSE MUSCLE'LL ALWAYS PULL YA THROUGH.

GUESS I'M FEELING A LITTLE HOME-SICK...

TRAIN SOME MORE!!

YOU, MISS, ARE AN IGNORANT FOOL!

SHOULD I HAVE TOLD HER OFF? TRIED TO ARGUE?

WHAT SHOULD I HAVE SAID BACK THERE?

SHE CORRECTLY ABSORBED THE VALUES SHE WAS TAUGHT, AND SHE'S GROWN UP INTO AN EXCEPTIONALLY CAPABLE PERSON.

BUT SHE'S CERTAINLY NO FOOL.

MAYBE THAT'S A CRITICAL STEP IN MY JOURNEY AS A PERSON BORN HALF FROM THE KILLERS AND HALF FROM THE KILLED.

WHAT IF IT'S IMPORTANT FOR ME TO CONFRONT HER?

SO WHAT OTHER OPTIONS ARE THERE?

HER VIEWS MIGHT LOOK WARPED AND TWISTED TO ME...

...BUT I'M NOT SURE FORCING HER TO ALTER THEM IS ULTIMATELY MUCH DIFFERENT THAN WHAT THE HAUPI SUFFERED.

TMP

スタ…

...I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.

SHOULD I WAIT IT OUT, TRUSTING THAT OUR SUPERVISORS CAN HANDLE THIS MORE SKILLFULLY THAN ME?

NO NEED TO MIND THE OTHER TRAINEES LIKE DURING MORNING EXERCISE.

AHH, THE NIGHT'S GREAT FOR RUNNING. I CAN GO ALL OUT.

MAYBE I'LL TAKE A LAP OF THE ENTIRE LIBRARY. I CAN TAKE IT EASY TOMORROW.

I WONDER IF I'D GET IN TROUBLE WITH THE NIGHT WATCH...

HAHA...

WELL, I TRIED. I'M SURE I HAVE TO BE A LOT QUICKER TO-

MAY I ALWAYS HAVE THE COURAGE TO GO ON.

MAY I ALWAYS HAVE THE COURAGE TO GO ON.

WASN'T THERE SOMETHING ABOUT THIS IN OUR UNIT ON RAKTA CULTURE? IF YOU CAN REPEAT A WISH THREE TIMES BEFORE A FALLING STAR FADES FROM VIEW...

WOW!

WHAT A HUGE FALLING STAR!

U

I SAID IT IN TIME !!

WAIT...!

THAT'S NOT A FALLING STAR AT ALL.

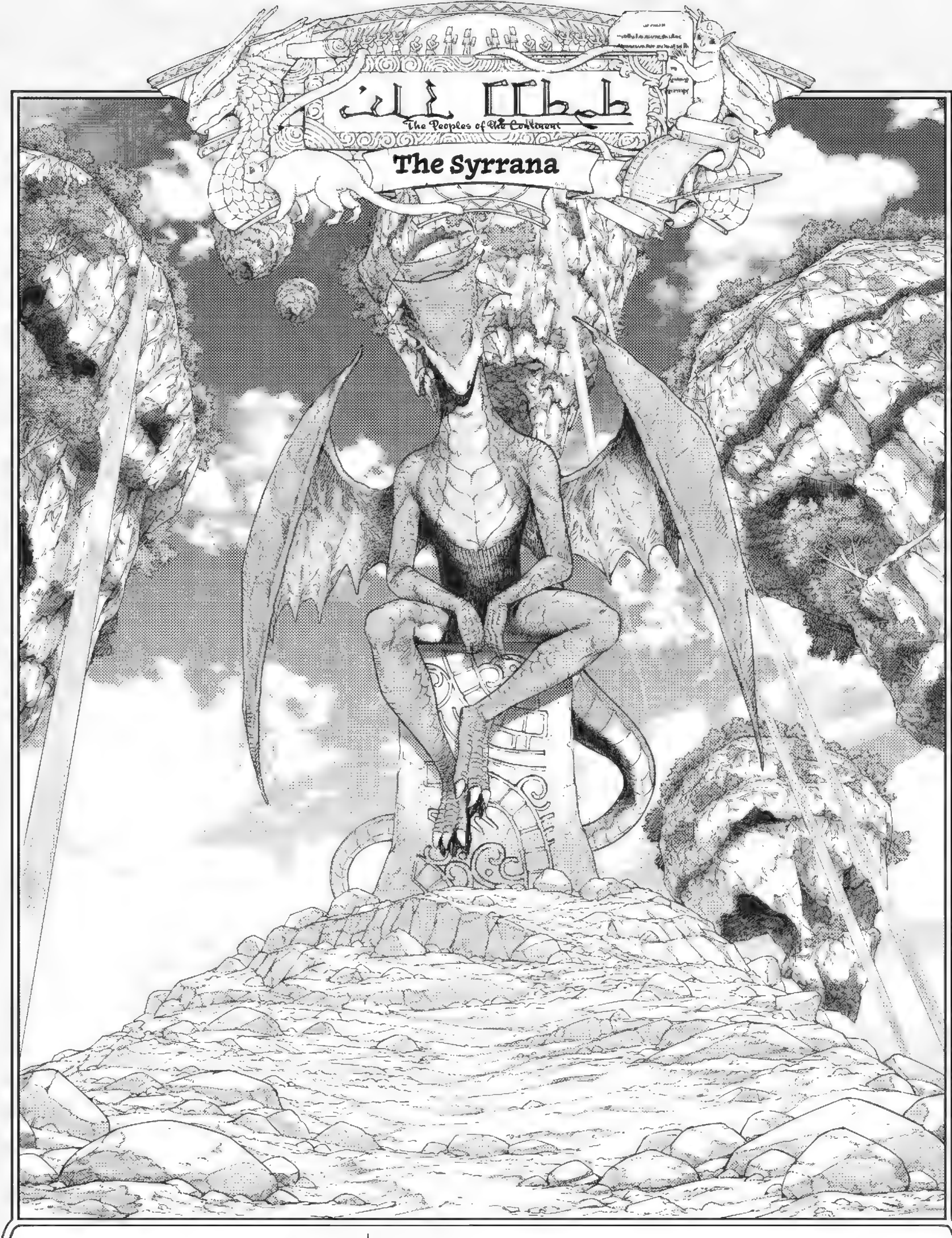


IT'S...

...A PERSON ?!!

The Peoples of the Continent

The Syrrana



[Classification] Unknown

Great winged peoples native to the continent's skies.

[Faith] Unknown | **[Color] Unknown** | **[Temperament] Lofty and Obstinate**

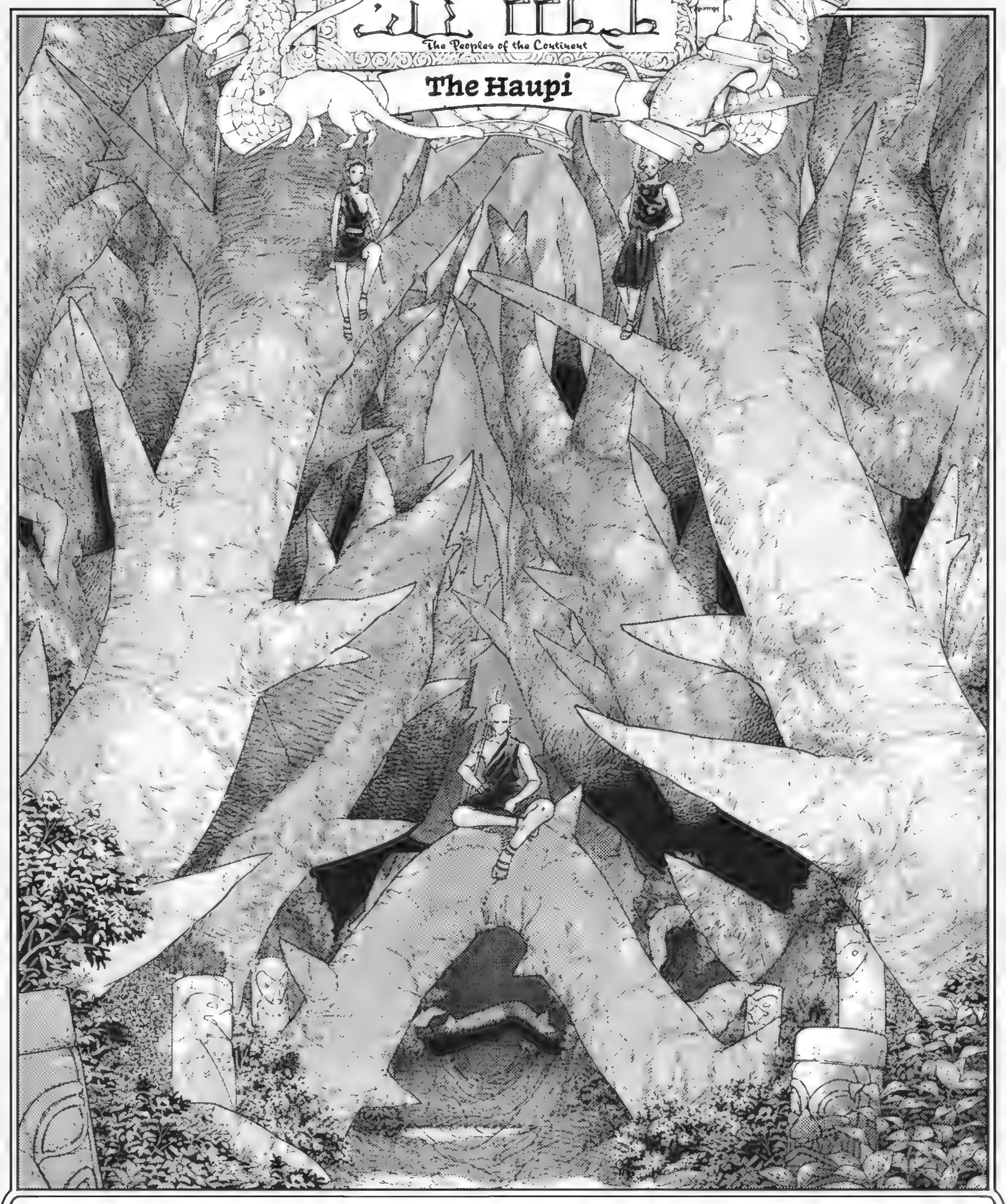
Though included as one of the continent's peoples in a practical sense, the Syrrana seem to be quite different in origin, and they keep themselves shrouded in mystery. They rarely meddle in the other races' affairs, instead preferring to observe the continent's evolving ecosystem while maintaining a certain distance and degree of authority.

For beings that must live for hundreds of years, you'd think they could manage to pick up a bit of tolerance along the way.

(On being turned away at the entrance to Syrrana lands)

The Peoples of the Continent

The Haupi



[Classification] Haupi Family | Peoples hailing from the continent's forests, with pale skin and long, pointed ears.

[Faith] Arom | **[Color] Black** | **[Temperament] Lofty and Obstinate**

Founders of the continent's oldest kingdom, the Haupi laid the early framework for modern civilization. The name "Haupi" means "the knowing ones," and the color black is esteemed as the only color that cannot be stained by any other.

Tomorrow I enter the gates of the Haupi city.
I intend to educate these miserable hermits on the importance of cultural exchange.

(Final log entry, made within the borders of the Haupi Autonomous Region. Mahcustah's writings abruptly end here.)

24 The Lights in the Falling Stars Are Mana

WHAT'S A *PERSON* DOING...

...FALLING FROM THE SKY?!

WHUD

KRSH

KA-KRSH

I'M NOT GONNA MAKE IT!

THRK

THRK

THRK

SKKT

SKKT

SKKT

SKKT

SLTHR...



FSH...

THE HORNS ON HER FOREHEAD SUGGEST KADOE...!

SHE'S COMPLETELY WHITE.

FWOOOOOOOO...

FWIP

?!

...BUT ALL THE HORNED PEOPLES OF THE CONTINENT HAVE BLACK HAIR.

AND WHAT'S THIS LIGHT SURROUNDING HER...?

...?

BLINK

FLAIL

FLAIL

!!

H-HOLD ON!

YOU SHOULD TRY TO TAKE IT EASY FOR A–

All right! All right! I'm putting you down!

FLAIL

OH!

GOOD! YOU'RE AWAKE!

HER EYES. THEY'RE RED.

THEN SHE'S A CITLAPOL!!!

AND THE LACK OF A MASK...? I GUESS SHE CHOOSES NOT TO WEAR ONE.

ZWIP

ARE. YOU. ALL. RIGHT?

HOW DOES THAT ONE GO AGAIN ...?

LET'S SEE...

UH, OH... THE ONLY WORDS I KNOW IN KADOE ARE SIMPLE GREET-INGS...

...!

多吐臥ヒ和終幸臥？

ARE...

ARE YOU SAYING YOU'RE FEELING ILL?

...!

BODY ...!

ALL RIGHT?!

FEEL GOOD?! NOT HURT!

?!

HRN!

HRN!

FWAP FWAP

THIS LIGHT... I'VE SEEN THIS BE-FORE...

HER ENTIRE BODY IS CONSTANTLY AWASH.

A GLOW LIKE THAT MUST REPRESENT AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF ENERGY.

THE ORE HAS A NATURAL TENDENCY TO CONCENTRATE AND ABSORB MANA FROM THE SURROUNDING GEOLOGY.

WHEN SPLIT, THE STORED MANA RADIATES OUT FROM THE EXPOSED SURFACE.

OF COURSE!

AND THE LIGHT YOU OBSERVE IS THANKS TO THE PECULIAR PROPERTY OF MANA TO EMIT A VISIBLE GLOW WHEN IN HIGH CONCENTRATIONS.

THE LIGHT I'M SEEING...

...IS COMING FROM MANA!

THE UNPAINTED WANDERERS ARE SAID TO BE BORN POSSESSING IMMENSE QUANTITIES OF MANA.

WHEN I REALLY CLENCH DOWN, ALL THE WAY TO THE PIT OF MY STOMACH, THE OLD SCAR ON MY FOREHEAD STARTS TO SPARKLE. IT'S THE TINIEST BIT OF MANA ESCAPING MY BODY.

IF SHE'S RADIATING THIS MUCH WITHOUT EVEN **TRYING**...

...JUST HOW MUCH POWER IS IN HER?!

ALL... RIGHT ...?

MANA IS THE ENERGY THAT MAKES ALL LIFE POSSIBLE.

BUT FOR SOME PEOPLE, TOO MUCH CAN ACTUALLY BE QUITE DANGEROUS.

"FEEL GOOD?! NOT HURT!"

SHE WASN'T TALKING ABOUT HER-SELF. SHE WAS ASKING ABOUT ME!

FFFT... PFFF...

I DON'T SEEM TO FEEL ANY NAUSEA...

FFFT... PFFF...

ALV AND MISS SOHN SEEMED TO THINK I'VE GOT A REALLY HIGH TOLERANCE, BUT...

What if they're wrong?

IS IT MY SHIRT...? CAN MANA PASS THROUGH CLOTH?

WHAT WERE THE SIGNS, AGAIN? SUMOMO SAID HIS SKIN WENT RED LIKE A **BURN.**

RIGHT...!

I MUST'VE BEEN EXPOSED TO A **REALLY** HIGH DOSE OF MANA!

!

WEIRDED OUT

...

TA-

I! AM! FINE!! NO! PROBLEM !!

DAH!

AHHHHH! THERE YOU ARE!!

?!

FW-

FWAP

THIS ISN'T MY FAULT! HONEST!

SHOVE

SHOVE

TEI'S THE ONE WHO LET GO! I SWEAR!

I TOLD YOU TO HANG ON TIGHT! WEREN'T YOU LISTEN-ING?!

HOW COULD YOU JUST *VANISH* LIKE THAT WHEN WE'RE IN MIDAIR?!

TMP

BUT...
OH! ARE YOU THE ONE WHO STOPPED TEI'S FALL?!

YEAH, UH...

UH, ACTUALLY I DON'T THINK I REALLY DID ANYTHING TO-

BLAB TO ME

NO, WAIT... A HYRON?

YOU'RE A HAUPI-

BLAB TO ME

I GUESS YOU'D SAY I'M HER... INTER-PRETER?

ANYWAY, THANKS FOR YOUR HELP. BOY, DO I OWE YOU ONE!

BLAB TO ME

OH! SORRY. I'M POPOPO, A KOHKWA IN THE LIAISONS OFFICE!

VALLEY SPIRIT
POPOPO

BUT THAT MEANS... YOU WENT *NEAR* HER?!

HOW ARE YOU FEELING?!

NO RASHES OR ANY-THING?!

WAIT!

SHE WAS GONE!!!

...AND I WAS ALL LIKE...

Oh, no!

...BUT BEFORE I KNEW IT...

SEE, WHAT *HAPPENED* WAS, TEI HERE BEGGED ME TO TAKE HER ON A RIDE, SO I LET HER CLIMB ON MY BACK...

'Cause what else was I gonna do?!

I ALMOST HAD A HEART ATTACK! THE WHOLE THING WAS A *SECRET*, SEE? AND BOY, IF SOME-THING HAPPENED TO HER, THE PRO-TECTIONS OFFICE WOULD EAT ME ALIVE!

Eep! Just the thought!

WOW, THAT'S SOMETHING... NOT EVEN THE MAGI IN THE PROTECTIONS OFFICE CAN GET CLOSE TO TEI! MOST OF 'EM, ANYWAY...

SAY...!

NO, NO. I SEEM TO BE FINE.

IT SEEMS I CAN EVEN TOUCH HER, NO PROB-LEM...

WHO ARE YOU, ANYWAY? A BOOK THIEF?!

N-NO!

YOU'VE GOT A *REAL* DISTINCT FACE.

I FEEL LIKE I WOULD'VE REMEMBERED A KAFNA LIKE YOU...

THIS HERE'S TEI!

SHE'S ANOTHER ONE OF THIS YEAR'S TRAINEES!

I'M ONE OF THE NEW TRAINEES.

MY NAME'S THEO FUMIS!

YOU DON'T SAY!

Well, let's just cut to the chase, then!

THAT MAKES THIS REAL EASY!

KRNCH

NICE TO MEET YOU, MISS T-

LET'S SEE... KADOE GREET EACH OTHER WITH...

OH! SO SHE'S NUMBER 27!

ONE OF WHOM IS YET TO JOIN US, DUE TO SPECIAL CIRCUM-STANCES.

ZWIP

SHAKE SHAKE

DON'T TAKE IT HARD. SHE'S VERY CAUTIOUS.

TEI! IT'S ALL RIGHT! YOU WON'T HURT THIS BOY!

MUST NOT COME NEAR! STAY AWAY!

HUH? YOU WANNA GET UP ON THE WALL?

THE PROTECTIONS OFFICE WOULD SPOT YOU! THEY PATROL ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT, YOU KNOW!

NO WAY! NOT A CHANCE! WHAT IF YOU FELL AGAIN?!

ARE YOU SAYING YOU STILL WANT TO GO FOR A RIDE?

HUH ?

DON'T WORRY. THIS DOESN'T HURT AT ALL.

SO, AS I WAS SAYING, TEI WAS INSISTENT ABOUT THIS RIDE, SO I SNUCK HER OUT OF HER ROOM. AND NOW–

WHAP

miss

WHAP

miss

WHAP

miss

WHAP

miss

WHAP

COMPLAIN ALL YOU WANT. IT WON'T HELP.

OH, GOODNESS. C'MON, TEI! WE HAVE TO GET BACK NOW!

EEP!

TMP

H-HOW IN THE WORLD ...?!

TING

TING

TING

HI-YAH!

UM... MORE LIKE MARTIAL ARTS, I GUESS?

LIKE WHAT MONKS DO! SHE'S USING SKY MANA TO WALK THROUGH THE AIR!

EXCEPT... I DON'T THINK IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE THAT EASY.

MATL... SHE'S USING *MAGIC* ?!

IS THAT THE MATLIT-QUETZA?! THE SOARING VOID?!

...!

IS THAT IT? SHE'S TRYING TO GET SOMEPLACE HIGH UP?

I FIGURED TEI WAS BASICALLY A REGULAR GIRL. JUST KINDA PALE. BUT I GUESS SHE'S A LOT MORE THAN THAT.

TO BE HONEST, TONIGHT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE REALLY INTERACTED WITH HER ONE-ON-ONE.

I WAS JUST SO EXCITED WHEN SHE REACHED OUT AND WANTED TO TALK TO ME, BUT THEN THINGS KINDA GOT OUT OF HAND...

I DON'T WANNA BE THE ONLY ONE RE-SPONSIBLE IF SOME-THING GOES WRONG!

NOOO! YOU GOTTA COME WITH ME!

I'LL STAY DOWN HERE AND KEEP AN EYE OUT IN CASE SHE FALLS!

I GOTTA GET UP THERE AND FETCH HER BACK!

F- FINE ...!

I GET IT! I'LL GO WITH YOU!

WAAAAAAAH!

...AND VERY FAR FROM THE ONLY HOME SHE'S EVER KNOWN. I EXPECT SHE NEEDS THE OCCASIONAL CHANCE TO STRETCH HER WINGS AND FEEL FREE OF MIND-FUL EYES.

NOW SHE'S HERE IN A BIG, STRANGE CITY, SURROUNDED BY UNFAMILIAR FACES...

...I'M TOLD THAT BACK IN HER VILLAGE, SHE WASN'T ALLOWED OUTSIDE DURING THE DAY.

THE ONLY TIME SHE COULD GO OUT WAS AT NIGHT, AFTER THE REST OF THE VILLAGERS FELL ASLEEP.

ARE YOU SURE IT'S SAFE TO LET HER RUN AROUND LIKE THAT?

OF COURSE, THAT DOESN'T MEAN THE EYES AREN'T THERE. WE'LL BE WATCHING FROM AFAR, KEEPING HER SAFE.

MAN, THAT BOY, THOUGH...

IS HIS *MATLA* AS IMPRESSIVE AS THEY SAY?

...IT IS.

THE BLOND BOY HAS A BIT OF A REPUTATION AMONG THOSE WITH THE SIGHT.

CAN'T BELIEVE HE GOT SO CLOSE WITHOUT KEEL-ING OVER.

I sure couldn't do it.

CENTRAL LIBRARY
PROTECTIONS OFFICE
YOH SHIOW

CENTRAL LIBRARY
PROTECTIONS OFFICE
NILS KAN'U

CENTRAL LIBRARY
PROTECTIONS OFFICE
KARIN TLAVUIZCAL

HMPH. IF IT'S *THAT* OBVIOUS, YOU'D THINK I COULD AT LEAST CATCH A GLIMPSE.

YUP! LET'S GO!

YOU GOOD ?

WITH AN AURA LIKE THAT, HE'S NOT GOING TO HAVE ANY TROUBLE AROUND HER.

DON'T WORRY. PLENTY OF SKILLED MAGI DON'T HAVE IT. Present company included.

YOU'RE EITHER BORN WITH THE SIGHT OR YOU AREN'T.

PERHAPS A FIRST THROUGH-OUT HISTORY. I'M UNAWARE OF ANY RECORD OF ANOTHER BEING WITH SUCH A PRONOUNCED EFFECT ON HER SURROUNDINGS, CITLAPOL OR OTHERWISE.

IT'S A LITERAL MAGNITUDE OF DIFFER-ENCE.

YAAAWN

MROWR

BUT THE GIRL APPEARS TO BE LEAKING *ACTUAL* MANA.

EVEN THE MOST IMPRESSIVE *MATLA* IN THE WORLD IS STILL JUST A REPRESEN-TATION. YOU'RE GLIMPSING THE WAVELENGTH OF WHAT'S INSIDE.

THE GIRL, HOWEVER, IS A WHOLE OTHER STORY.

CUT THE CHATTER, KARIN.

VROOOM

YOU TOO, NILS. WITH YOU KEEPING THE VINES HIDDEN, THE BLOND KID NEARLY RAN STRAIGHT INTO THEM!

I would've liked to see that!

PFFT!

...THE CONTINENT'S GREATEST WOOD MAGUS?

SURE, WHATEVER. BUT I STILL DON'T SEE WHY SHE NEEDS SOMEONE OF YOH'S CALIBER AS HER PERSONAL BODY-GUARD. ISN'T IT KINDA OVERKILL TO ASSIGN...

...I *WILL* BE COLLECTING OVERTIME PAY, THOUGH.

OUR ONLY CONCERN IS TO SEE OUR ASSIGNED DUTIES THROUGH.

EVERY JOB AT THE LIBRARY IS AS IMPORTANT AS ANY OTHER.

MISS TEI ARRIVED HERE AT THE LIBRARY A LITTLE BEFORE THE REST OF YOU.

WHO KNOWS? MAYBE SHE'S SICK OF IT ALL, AND THIS IS HER WAY OF ACTING OUT.

SHE'S GOT A LOT TO DO, SEE? GETTING USED TO THE NEW ENVIRONMENT... FIGURING OUT HOW TO REIN IN ALL THAT MANA... LEARNING TO SPEAK HYRON...

HE'S MASTER PARTHA'S RIGHT-HAND MAN.

HM. I SUPPOSE YOU TWO HAVE YET TO MEET.

BELLIR ...? Never heard of him.

LORD BELLIR.

WHO STUMBLED ACROSS THE LITTLE BUNDLE OF MANA, ANYWAY?

IN ANY CASE...

...HE DOES SPEND MOST OF HIS TIME IN HIS BEDCHAMBERS THESE DAYS. HENCE LORD BELLIR'S ASSISTANCE.

GRANTED ...

MASTER PARTHA IS *VERY WELL*, THANK YOU.

HUH?!

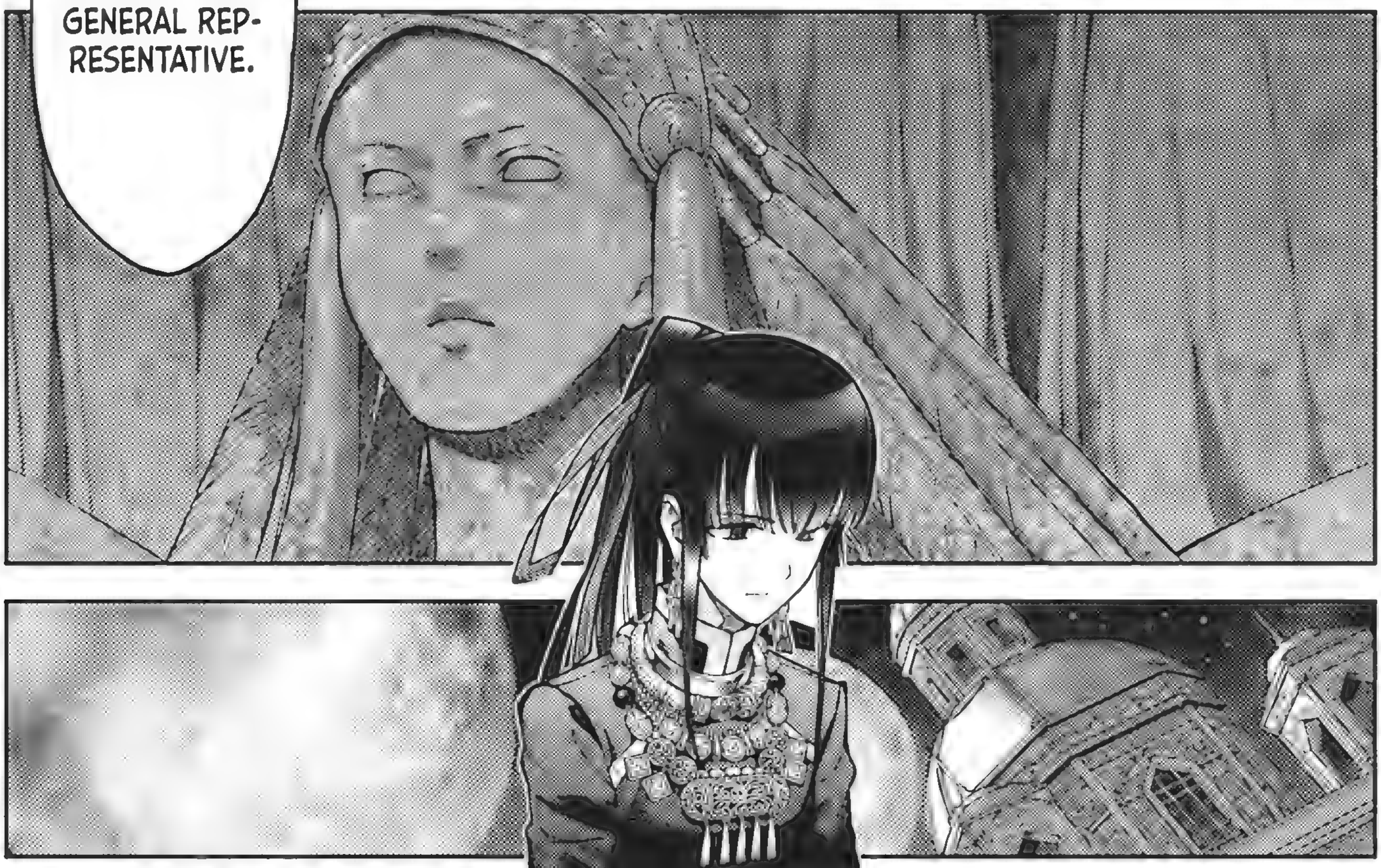
YOU MEAN THE HERO OF THE KOKOPAH IS STILL *ALIVE*?!

...IT MEANS THE GIRL IS HERE ON THE ENDORSEMENT OF THE GREAT MAGUS OF PUPPETS.

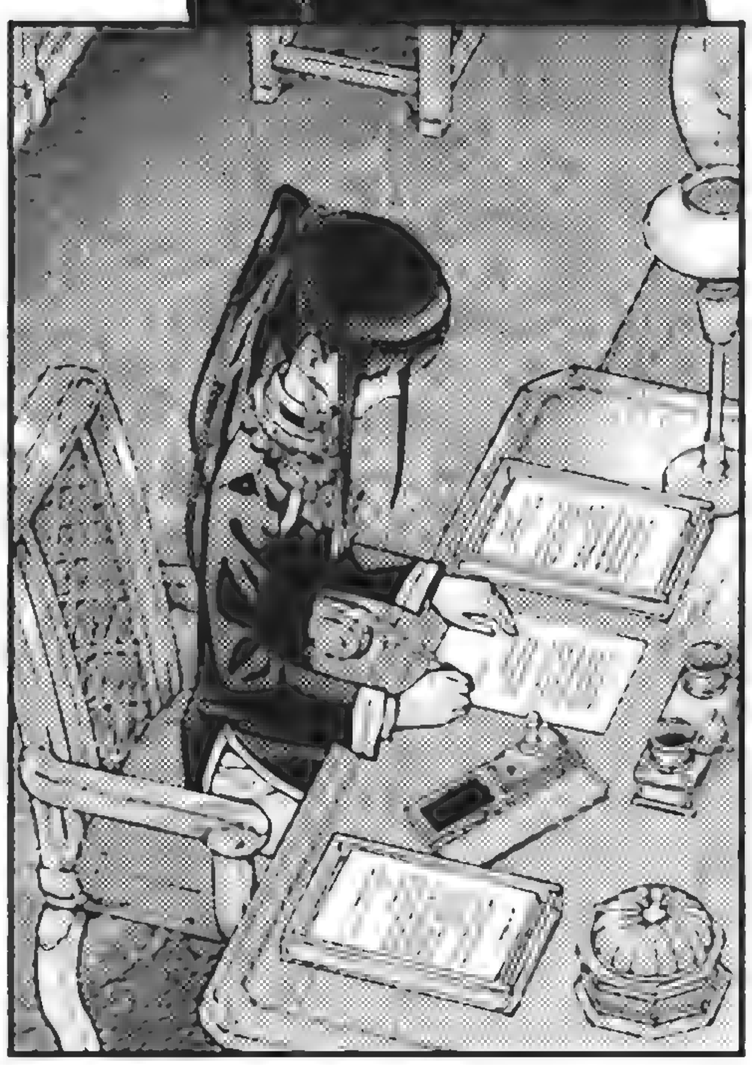
WOW. BACKED BY THE HERO OF THE KOKOPAH, HUH?

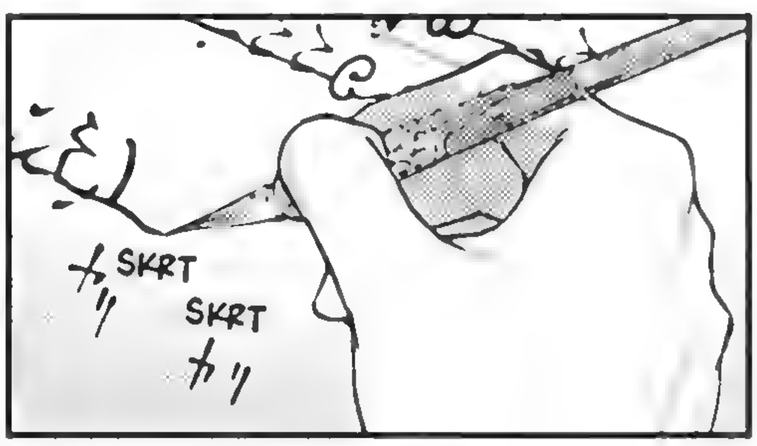
I GUESS THAT MEANS SHE'S GOT A REAL SHOT...

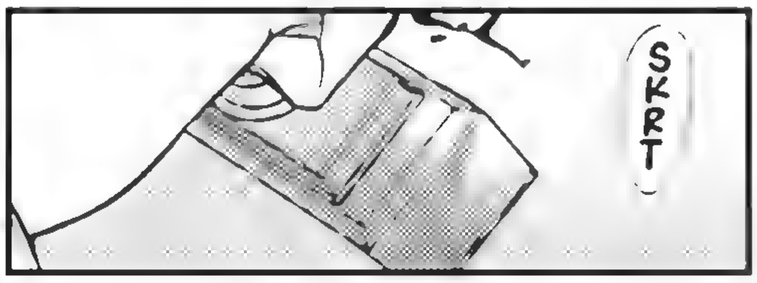
...AT BECOMING THE LIBRARY'S NEXT GENERAL REP-RESENTATIVE.



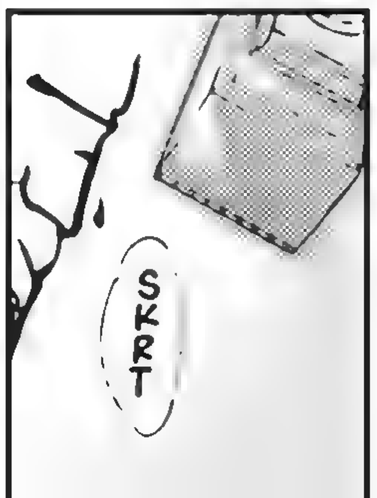














THP

THP

ZWP

THAP

ZWP

ZWP

ZWP ZWP ZWP ZWP

I'M SO SORRY, MASTER SEDONA. I WISH THERE WAS SOMETHING WE COULD DO TO HELP.

OUT OF THE QUESTION.

BELIEVE ME, WE'RE JUST AS EAGER TO HEAD TO THE SPARRING ROOM AS YOU ARE.

THE NERVE, MISAKI! SHOW SOME *SINCERITY* WHEN YOU PRAISE MASTER SEDONA!

ZWP ZWP ZWP ZWP ZWP ZWP ZWP ZWP ZWP ZWP ZWP ZWP

GO ON. KEEP SIGN-ING THOSE DOCUMENTS ALL COOL-LIKE.

YUP. JUST LIKE THAT. OOH. SO COOL. ♡

MASTER GAGAVITZ!

HAHA! HOW'S THE NEW JOB? WORKING HARD?

KA-CHAK

SORRY TO INTRUDE, MASTER STEWARD.

NOK NOK

PAPER-WORK'S PILING UP 'CAUSE OF TODAY'S GENERAL EXERCISES, HUH?

IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT. NOTHING THAT CAN'T WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW.

PARDON ME, GENERAL, BUT MASTER SEDONA STILL HAS A LOT TO-

GENERAL!

SIR, YES, SIR!

THE STEWARD AND I NEED TO HAVE A LITTLE MEETING. TOP BRASS ONLY.

SHINJI, MISAKI, YOU'RE DISMISSED.

YOU'RE DOING A FINE JOB, MISAKI. BUT THERE'S NO NEED TO FUSS OVER THE DETAILS.

'COURSE, I'D BE LYING IF I SAID THAT WASN'T ONE OF YOUR BEST QUALITIES!

BWA HA HA HA!

...YES, SIR.

WE'LL LEAVE YOU TO IT.

FSH

WELL NOW, SEDONA...

TIME TO GET THIS STRATEGY MEETING IN SESSION!

P-

TMP

...NO MATTER HOW MANY YEARS I KEEP AT THIS, I'LL NEVER ACHIEVE EVEN A FRACTION OF YOUR REPUTATION...

I'M JUST AFRAID...

...I KNOW YOU'RE AT YOUR BEST OUT IN THE FIELD, MOVING FROM SITE TO SITE. IT'S WHO YOU ARE.

...

NOT AT ALL!

IT'S PROVING A MOST VALUABLE EXPERIENCE!

LIFE AS A SAGE MUST BE PRETTY DULL FOR YOU, EH?

EVER SINCE I HANDED THE STEWARDSHIP OVER, I'VE FELT TEN YEARS YOUNGER!

...WE'RE GOING TO NEED THE BEST OF THE BEST RIGHT HERE IN THESE WALLS.

...THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD IS AT HAND. AND WHEN THE LIBRARY INSTALLS ITS NEW SYMBOL...

STILL...

SNAP

...THAT MAKES IT HARDER FOR IT TO STAY COOPED UP IN THESE CHAMBERS.

WHEN THE WIND HAS KNOWN THE FREEDOM OF RACING ACROSS THE LAND...

Do you really need that many longs?

MASTER KOMAKO WAS A KID ONCE, TOO. A LONG, LONG, LONG TIME AGO.

SO WHAT IF THEY'RE CONSIDERING HER?

TO EVEN *CONSIDER* THAT BRAT A CONTENDER... IT'S A MOCKERY.

BUT I HEAR THIS KID'S GOT EVEN *MORE* MANA THAN MASTER KOMAKO.

THE LIBRARY IS A VERY DIFFERENT PLACE FROM WHEN MASTER KOMAKO ESTABLISHED IT.

...I HAVE TO ADMIT IT'S A GREAT CONCERN OF MINE AS WELL.

CALLING IT A *MOCKERY* SEEMS A BIT CHILDISH, BUT YES...

THE PEOPLE HAVE FAITH IN HER BECAUSE OF HER *COURAGE*.

OUR GENERAL REPRESENTATIVE IS NOT LAUDED FOR THE AMOUNT OF MANA SHE POSSESSES, NOR FOR HER SKILL WITH MAGIC.

THE ONLY REASON THE LEADERS OF EACH REGION AGREE TO ABIDE BY OUR CODE...

...IS BECAUSE MASTER KOMAKO HAD A DIRECT HAND IN SEALING THE CALAMITY AWAY.

THE CENTRAL LIBRARY IS DESPISED BY EVERY REGIONAL GOVERNMENT.

WE DO IT TO PRESERVE THE ARMISTICE, OF COURSE, BUT EVEN SO, IT'S HARD NOT TO CONSTRUE THE LIBRARY'S ACTIONS AS RATHER SANCTIMONIOUS.

WE MONOPOLIZE THEIR CULTURAL TREASURES AND FORBID THEM FROM PRINTING BOOKS AS THEY SEE FIT.

THEY CAN'T VERY WELL TURN THEIR BLADE ON A HERO OF THE CONTINENT. THEY'D LOSE THEIR PEOPLE'S TRUST AND DESTABILIZE THEIR ENTIRE BASE OF POWER.

SO...

...THEY BIDE THEIR TIME.

THEY WAIT ANXIOUSLY FOR THE LAST OF THE SEVEN TO RETIRE...

...AND FOR A NEW GENERAL REPRESENTATIVE TO BE NAMED.

AND THE MOMENT THE BATON PASSES...

...WE LOSE ANY ASSURANCE THAT THEIR PRESENTLY HUMBLE PLEAS...

...WILL NOT ESCALATE TO FORCE AS THEY STRUGGLE TO RECLAIM THE LAND'S STOLEN TEXTS.

HISTORICAL RELICS HAVE A WAY OF RALLYING THE PEOPLE.

...

Could you at least try to study...?

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT FOR THEM TO GET THEIR HANDS ON A BUNCH OF OLD BOOKS? 'SPECIALLY WHEN THE LIBRARY...

...TAKES SUCH GOOD CARE OF 'EM. WE EVEN KEEP 'EM ON DISPLAY!

I'M JUST A KOHKWA. ALL THIS POLITICS STUFF KINDA GOES OVER MY HEAD.

THAT'S ONE OF THE PRIMARY RISKS THE LIBRARY HOPES TO MANAGE. THEY DON'T WANT TO SEE ONE FACTION MONOPOLIZING THE POWER OF A TEXT, LEADING TO RENEWED HOSTILITIES.

AT THE SAME TIME, THEY RISK INCITING WAR AS OTHER GROUPS VIE TO CLAIM THE TEXT FOR THEMSELVES.

AND TO THOSE OF THE MANACCHAN FAITH, IT IS HOLY SCRIPTURE. IF A GIVEN SECT POSSESSES IT, THEY GAIN LEGITIMACY. THEY HOLD SWAY OVER BELIEVERS.

TAKE THE *PAEAN OF THE SEA OF TREES*. IT'S ONE OF THE SEVEN SEMINAL SCRIPTS.

WE'RE LONG PAST THE AGE OF OLD HEROES HOLDING HANDS AND PRAYING FOR PEACE.

HMPH. LET THEM TRY.

IF THEY WISH TO TAKE OUR BOOKS BY FORCE, WE'LL SIMPLY STRIKE THEM DOWN.

BECAUSE *NONE* OF THEM HAVE SAVED THE WORLD.

IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MANY CANDIDATES WE CONSIDER.

WE STAND AT THE LIBRARY'S MOMENT OF TRUTH.

UHH... IS YOUR SPELL SEAL STARTING TO EAT AT YOUR BRAIN?

ACCORDING TO LORD BELLIR...

...HER MOTHER DIDN'T EVEN MAKE IT THROUGH LABOR THANKS TO THE MANA.

THE GIRL WAS AN ORPHAN BEFORE SHE EVEN EMERGED INTO THIS WORLD.

HER FATHER COULDN'T BE NEAR HER, EITHER. SHE GREW UP SEEING HIM ONLY FROM A DISTANCE.

YEAH. ABOUT HER...

AND THE MOST RECENT TO ARRIVE...?

NO SURPRISE, GIVEN THE CIRCUM-STANCES OF HER UPBRING-ING.

BUT SHE JUST DOESN'T SEEM TO OPEN UP.

WE'RE AFFORDING HER SPACE, OFFERING TRAINING AND GUIDANCE AS WE CAN.

...WE FIND SOME WAY TO GIVE HER A NORMAL LIFE...

I JUST HOPE...

SNF

SNFF... ズズズ...

HAH. LOOK AT ME.

I GET A FEW DRINKS IN ME AND GO ALL BLUB-BERY.

NO, GENERAL.

YOU'VE ALWAYS HAD A KIND HEART, LIQUOR OR NONE.

IF I GET TOO CLOSE, I'LL FRIGHTEN HER AWAY AGAIN. YOU HAVE TO GO TO HER, POPOPO.

I... I'LL TRY...

UM... TEI?

LET'S GO HOME, ALL RIGHT? THAT'S ENOUGH ADVENTURE FOR ONE DAY.

PRAYING ...?

IT LOOKS LIKE MAYBE SHE'S... PRAYING?

OR SOME-THING LIKE THAT.

WHAT'S SHE DOING?

THAT'S WHY SHE WANTED TO BE OUTSIDE, AND THAT'S WHY SHE'S SO DETERMINED TO BE SOMEWHERE HIGH!

THE KADOE BELIEVE THAT WISHES COME TRUE IF THEY'RE MADE NEAR THE MAHINA'HOKU*!

*MAHINA'HOKU: THE FULL MOONS

FLIT FLIT FLIT

C'MON! PLEASE! PRETTY PLEASE!

FLIT FLIT

GRR!

TELL ME!

WHAT IS IT?! I WANNA KNOW!

FLIT FLIT

YOU'RE MAKING A WISH, TEI?

I'LL STOP SAYING WE HAVE TO GO HOME. SO, PLEASE! TELL ME!

WHAT DID SHE SAY?!

...!

...AND...

...AND GET TO READ LOTS OF NEW BOOKS...

...AND HAVE FUN IN HER NEW LIFE AT THE LIBRARY...

...FOR HER FATHER TO BE HAPPY...

SHE... SHE'S GOT A LOT OF WISHES.

...AND THAT SHE'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE FRIENDS...

GRMMM..

SNIFF...

...!

SHE SAYS SHE WISHES FOR EVERY-ONE AROUND HER TO STAY HEALTHY...

IT'S

SO

SAD!

ERP! What is it?!

HERE AT THE LIBRARY, THERE ARE A HANDFUL OF SPIRITS AND PEOPLE AROUND THAT CAN HANDLE THE AMOUNT OF MANA SHE PUTS OFF.

BUT SHE STILL WON'T LET ANY OF THEM GET CLOSE!

I WANNA BE HER FRIEND, TOO, BUT ALAS...

!!

SHE'S WISHING FOR A FRIEND? *I'LL* BE HER FRIEND!

WAIT! I SUG-GESTED THE SAME THING!

BUT SHE SAYS YOU CAN'T COME NEAR.

WHAT IF THE FIRST PHRASES SHE INSISTED ON LEARNING HERE AT THE LIBRARY WERE WARNINGS TO KEEP OTHERS AWAY?

WHAT IF THAT'S ON PURPOSE?

"MUST NOT COME NEAR! STAY AWAY!"

THAT'S THE ONE BIT OF HYRON SHE SEEMED VERY CONFIDENT USING.

...SHE MAY HAVE WITNESSED COUNTLESS PEOPLE CLOSE TO HER FALL ILL OR WORSE.

AS SHE GREW UP AND BEGAN TO COMPREHEND THE DANGER SHE POSES...

...I MIGHT HAVE SEVERELY UNDERESTIMATED THE CIRCUMSTANCES SHE'S HAD TO ENDURE.

AND IF THAT'S TRUE...

EVEN...

EVEN IF I DO FIND SOME WAY TO CONNECT WITH HER...

IT WOULD MEAN SHE'S LIVED WITHOUT THE WARMTH OF ANOTHER'S TOUCH.

THAT'S A PAIN I'M NOT SURE I CAN IMAGINE.

...I DON'T HAVE THE WORDS...

...TO COMMUNICATE THOSE FEELINGS.

VWRSH

HUH ...?

EEK!

IS THAT AN I'HEU?!

WH...

WHAT'S GOING ON?!

EEEEK!

WHAT'S THE HUNT-RESS OF THE TOHIL DOING IN THE *CITY*?!

?!

...!

WAS IT DRAWN TO HER GLOW?!

OR... COULD IT BE HUNTING FOR MANA?!

VWSH

WHY IN THE WORLD ...?!

FLAIL

FLAIL

POPOPO! I'M COUNTING ON YOU!

TMP

?!

AAACK!!

N...

NO WAY! NOPE! NUH-UH!

WHAT?!

POPOPO! WE HAVE TO SAVE HER!!

THERE ISN'T TIME TO CALL FOR HELP! SHE MIGHT *FALL!*

Stop that! Get off my back!

ERP...! I KNOW, BUT...!

PROTOCOL IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION IS TO INFORM THE PROTECTIONS OFFICE AND STAY WELL OUT OF THE WAY!

IF WE GO BARRELING AFTER HER, WE'LL ONLY MAKE THINGS WORSE!

NOT GOOD...

NOT GOOD...

AND... SHE'S GOT THAT COOL SOARING MOVE! SHE'LL BE FINE WITHOUT US!

MMBL

EXCEPT, I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN *CATCH* HER IN MIDAIR...

MMBL

THAT IS... *IF* SHE CAN STILL PULL IT OFF AT THAT SPEED...

WHAT DO I DO?!

WHAT DO I DO?!

FINE! I'LL GO! BUT I CAN'T PUT *YOU* IN DANGER!

MMBL

MMBL

ブッ

JUST PROMISE ME YOU WON'T FALL. PROMISE ME!

I PROMISE!

NGH! OF *COURSE* I WANT TO SAVE HER.

I CAN'T LEAVE TEI ON HER OWN!

VWOOSH

THWIP

I TOLD YOU NOT TO GO BARRELING AFTER HER!

YOU WANNA SAVE HER, TOO! LET'S GO!

ヒュオ

FLAIL

FWRRRSH

SHE PROBABLY DOESN'T NEED HELP FROM SOMEONE LIKE ME.

SHE'S GOT THE POWER TO WALK ACROSS THE SKY.

...I HAVE TO GO AFTER HER.

BUT SOMETHING INSIDE TELLS ME...

KEEP IT UP! WE'RE GAINING ON THEM!

I HAVE TO SHOW HER.

IF THERE'S ONE PLACE YOU CAN COUNT ON...

WAIT... WHAT?!

I'LL JUMP THE REST! BRACE YOUR-SELF!

FINE!

BUT ...!

SORRY, KID. I'M *SPENT.*

NGRK!

...FOR A HELPING HAND WHEN YOU'RE IN TROUBLE...

IF THERE'S ONE PLACE YOU CAN FIND A FRIEND, IT'S HERE AT THE LIBRARY.


GIVE ME YOUR HAND!!

CLASP...

HANG ON TIGHT!

FWOOOOOSH

WHUMP

NICE CATCH, POPOPO!

WH-WHO EXACTLY *ARE* YOU, KID?!

PHEW! WELL, THAT WAS UNEX-PECTED.

I GUESS THE CREATURE WAS DRAWN TO THE GLOW OF HER MANA.

KRNCH

WHAT'S YOUR GAME, KARIN?

?!

HUH?

THE GIRL'S FALL FROM THE SPIRIT'S BACK...

...AND THE MANIPULATION OF THE I'HEU. THAT WAS *YOU*.

SAW RIGHT THROUGH ME, HUH?

SEE?! EVEN OUR HOTSHOT WOOD MAGUS DIDN'T HAVE A CLUE.

YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE HOW MANY HOURS I PRACTICED THAT I'HEU TRICK.

I DON'T HAVE BIG FLASHY SPELLS LIKE YOU TWO. I GOTTA GET BY ON VARIETY, KEEPIN' LOTS OF ODDS AND ENDS UP MY SLEEVE.

BUMMER. AND HERE I THOUGHT I WAS BEIN' SNEAKY.

VWIP

THE KID'S NOT SAFE HERE.

SHOULDN'T BE AT THE LIBRARY AT ALL. C'MON. YOU KNOW I'M RIGHT.

WHAT ARE YOU AFTER?

HEY, I'M DOIN' YOU A FAVOR! IT'S JUST A FRIENDLY WARNING.

GRK

THE ONLY ONE WHO BELONGS AT THE CENTRAL LIBRARY'S HELM IS OUR DEAR GENERAL GAGAVITZ.

HE DIDN'T PASS THE TWELFTH SEAT ON TO SEDONA JUST FOR SOME DECREPIT OUTSIDER TO SWOOP IN. HONESTLY, TRYING TO INSTALL A BALL OF MANA AS OUR LEADER?

I REALLY DOUBT THE PROTECTIONS OFFICE IS GONNA STAND FOR THAT.

YEAH, YEAH.

I'M REMOVING YOU FROM GUARD DUTY.

NO MORE STUNTS LIKE THIS. I'LL NOT WARN YOU AGAIN.

VWRSH

YOU'RE SAYING I CAN STAND ON THESE, TOO?!

POPOPO, YOU SHOULD TRY IT!

DEAR ME, NO! WHAT IF I FELL?!

BUT, POPOPO... YOU CAN FLY...

WHOA!

THIS IS SO AMAZING!

AS MY K'AHKUM IS FOND OF SAYING...

...WHAT THE LIBRARY NEEDS IS NOT A POWERFUL MAGUS...

...BUT RATHER A LINK.

AND WHEN THAT LINK APPEARS, IT WILL BE FROM AMONG THE YOUTH.

I AM THE WIND.

I CAN TEAR THROUGH THE VANGUARD AND SWEEP DOWN THE MIGHTIEST WALLS.

BUT I CANNOT FASTEN THINGS TOGETHER.

AM I WRONG?

FRANKLY, I FIGURED *YOU* FOR THE NEXT IN LINE.

YOU KNOW SOME-THING I DON'T?

OOH. WHAT'S THIS?

HMHM... CAN'T WE?

HMPH. WELL, WE CAN'T EXACTLY AFFORD TO SIT AROUND WAITING FOR SOME NEW FACE TO APPEAR.

WILL YOU BE MY FRIEND?

MY NAME IS THEO!

THEO FUMIS!

BOW

SORRY. MY LIPS ARE SEALED.

PIT...

CYNTHEA LOH TEI.

Thus went...

...their fateful encounter.

The girl meant to become Magus of the Library...

はじめまして！
NICE TO MEET YOU!

...and the boy who would help her unite a generation.



To be continued.

Magus of the Library 5

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